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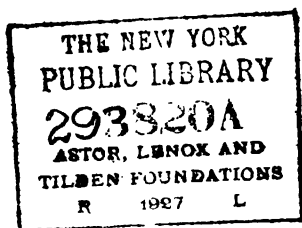
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L A C E .

BOOK THE FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.—SKETCH OF JULIANE'S EARLY LIFE.

AT last Countess Juliane had yielded to the pressing request of her aunt Princess Carola von Eyckhof-Menthin, and promised to attend the ball to be given at the house of Baron von Heddersdorf, Envoy Plenipotentiary to the Federal Council. The countess had, it is true, already sent her regrets, and assigned quite satisfactory grounds for her action—her husband, Count Albrecht von Iseneck, Actual Privy Councilor and Presiding Justice, was absent upon official duties and would not return before the following day. But Princess Carola had besought her so earnestly to chaperone her daughter, Princess Alix, who was to make her *début* in Berlin society this evening at Baron von Heddersdorf's, and the charming Alix herself had so besieged her with solicitations, and so often repeated to her, that she really hardly needed her mother's protection any longer, but that under no circumstances could she do without the support of a young, vivacious, and popular woman, with whom she could talk about all imaginable things, and whose advice she could ask on all difficult questions; her aunt's representations were so reasonable and hearty, the playful teasing of her cousin was so irresistible, that toward mid-day Juliane wrote Baroness von Heddersdorf a few hasty lines, in which she based, upon some harmless prevarication, her withdrawal of her former refusal and the subsequent acceptance, at the twelfth hour, of her polite invitation.

Now, however, the countess regretted that she had not remained firm and insisted upon not attending the ball. She felt a strange prejudice against the Von Heddersdorfs, a kind of superstitious aversion—they had brought unhappiness to her!

It was at the house of these same Von Heddersdorfs, five years ago, that she, as an unusually vivacious nineteen-year-old girl, was introduced into Berlin society; it was there that she had met Count Iseneck and there the foundation stone of her marriage was laid; it was there, too, that she afterward made the acquaintance of young Prince Ulrich von Engernheim-Kypstein—"wicked Ulrich," as the prince was then called by all his associates. In brief, there were connected with the name Von Heddersdorf, in Countess Juliane's mind, only recollections that caused her the deepest chagrin.

"In life everything repeats itself," she murmured, as she seated herself at the large window, and thoughtfully gazed out upon the dazzling white park, in which the walks were covered with a thick, soft sheet of snow, like a robe of white plush. The snow, that had for hours been incessantly and ominously falling from the December skies, had found for itself also a lodgement upon the trees, marking out in a rude fashion the delicate lines of their branches and twigs, and penetrating even into the hollows of their somber trunks.

"Everything repeats itself!"

Juliane uttered a deep sigh. The events of the last few days recalled to her mind with vivid accuracy all the circumstances that had attended the decisive step of her life. True, another was now playing the chief rôle—the charmingly fresh and unsuspecting Alix, who was gazing laughingly out into the world with her wonderful, large, dark brown, innocent eyes—but the drama was the same. In her case it had become a tragedy; God grant that in dear Alix's case it will have a happier conclusion!

To-day, just five years ago, in the winter of 1874, her uncle Prince Engelbert von Eychof-Menthin had come to Berlin, accompanied by his wife, her father's sister, Princess Carola, *née* Countess Wiking, for the purpose of participating in the deliberations of the House of Lords, to which he belonged by right of birth. Juliane had, upon this occasion, been invited by her relatives, at whose house she had received the warmest welcome when she became an orphan, to accompany them to Berlin. And she understood the object of this invitation and the significance for her of a stay in Berlin very well. Aunt Carola need not have put herself to such

great trouble to point out, by means of prudent hints, that it was not only charming, but also perfectly proper for a young girl upon the threshold of her twenties to withdraw from the quiet retirement of her country life, and learn to look about her in the noisy, exciting life of the great metropolis. Juliane had already told herself that her days at Menthin were numbered.

She had been very happy with her aunt and uncle; she loved them as she would have loved her parents, and in return was devotedly loved by them. She had completely accustomed herself to regard Alix as her younger sister, and Alix, who was two years old when the nine-year old Juliane came to live at Menthin, did not know but that Liane, as she was called at the castle, was a member of her family—whether sister or cousin was a matter of indifference to her.

Juliane had lost her mother in her earliest childhood, and retained no recollection of her whatever. When she was nine years old her father also died, after a long and severe illness. Even her father's appearance hovered before her mind's eye only in dark and confused outlines. She only knew that as long as she could remember she had seen a strange, pale-looking man pushed around upon a wheel-chair by an attendant, that she was conducted to him several times every day, and called him papa; but he had never made any reply to her, she had never heard him speak; when he was buried everybody cried, and she cried with the rest. Then she had gone to Menthin to live with Uncle Engelbert and Aunt Carola, and it was much nicer there than at home. And it was not very long before she had quite forgotten that she had ever been anywhere else. Menthin had become her true home.

Out of the child had grown a young girl, an attractive, bright, unusually vivacious young girl, perhaps a little too vivacious, too excitable and nervous. But "it suited her," as Princess Carola used to say.

Juliane was highly nervous and excitable, and when one said "Good morning" to her, her deep brown eyes would flash up brilliantly, and when she disagreed with any one about any matter, however small, her forehead would contract in deep folds, and she would knit her heavy brows. She had an unusually delicate physique; her hands and feet were like those of a child, and her whole appearance, in point of elegance and flexibility, produced the effect of that of a Spanish signorita. Her small, round head and her

pale bronze complexion (which latter, however, was perfectly healthy) were also entirely of a southern type; these half-opened, rosy lips, this saucy nose, with its delicately sensitive nostrils, those large, bright, sparkling eyes of deep brown color, protected by long, glossy black lashes and crowned with heavy, sickle-shaped eye-brows, and this luxurious, rebellious, bluish-black hair, that fell in natural ringlets over her forehead and temples, all suggested a southern nature. Had any one seen Countess Juliane von Wiking without knowing her native land, such a one would never have sought her home in the cold north, but only in the sunny south. And she was like the sun in the prince's house. She brought life, light, and air into the old castle of Menthin, and if Prince Engelbert and Princess Carola had been selfish, they would never have consented to being separated from their darling.

But they loved this merry child truly and unselfishly, and so they said to themselves that Juliane had now reached an age at which something must be done for her and her future.

Among the neighbors, their more intimate acquaintances and friends, who in midsummer and especially in the autumn, during the hunting season, came to spend some time at Menthin, there was not one man who was eligible for Juliane. Juliane's fortune was not large; it was by no means sufficient to render a continuation of the life the over-indulged and spoiled young girl had been leading in princely luxury, even approximately, possible. She was anything but practical, and had absolutely no knowledge of money and its value. It was even to be feared that she had inherited the characteristics of her mother, who had been senselessly extravagant. It was, for this reason, that the value of the jewels and lace was out of all proportion to the rest of the property she had inherited.

At any rate, Juliane had inherited her mother's passion for lace, and this was exhibited in the child to an exaggerated degree; it had almost become a mania with her. At an age when other girls are playing with their dolls, Juliane was already amusing herself with her costly lace, and she never grew weary of gazing upon certain fine specimens, upon the neatness and delicacy of their laborious workmanship, the numberless little threads forming the net, which were as fine as spider webs, and wove themselves together into designs that were sometimes ornamental and sometimes purely haphazard, the whole having the artistic effect of a painting. She felt the utmost contempt for all other kinds of manual labor. She had

again and again besought her Aunt Carola to have her instructed in the art of lace-making; she had importuned so long that the kind-hearted princess had surprised her upon the occasion of her birthday with an actual lace-maker, whom she had procured from Brussels. Juliane was perfectly happy, and the Belgian lace-maker became her best friend.

For hours at a time, day after day, Juliane would sit over her lace-pillow, and evinced a zeal, an aptness, and cleverness that evoked her instructress's heartiest approval. After the lapse of six months the Belgian returned to her native land richly rewarded with presents. She was no longer able to teach the countess anything new; the rest of her education in lace-making must be left to time and patient practice. And, strange to say, this vivacious, restless girl, who could not, as a general rule, remain quiet five minutes in the same place, but was forever moving nervously about, was, as it were, completely transformed so soon as she was seated behind her lace-pillow, weaving, twisting, and knotting the fine threads with her delicate and slender fingers. Often she would not move from her seat for hours at a time. By her tireless endurance and her cleverness she in fact at length attained a wonderful skill, and produced some of the loveliest results. And in this way she gradually acquired a most accurate knowledge of lace. She possessed all the accessible books that had been written upon the subject, and had studied them with great diligence. She was as familiar with the history of lace, and with the various kinds and patterns, as a connoisseur. She endured with the best of humors her uncle's teasing about her strange passion.

"If I do not find a husband," she would say, good-naturedly, "I have at least learned something by means of which I can earn my daily bread."

"Certainly!" assented the prince. "If you keep on learning, and continue to be industrious, you might perhaps earn five or six marks* a week. And you do not require very much more—for your gloves."

"Find a husband!" Juliane had jestingly said what her prudent relatives had often, especially during the last few weeks, earnestly discussed. And upon the same evening it had been decided that Carola and Juliane should this time accompany the prince, who was

* A mark is approximately twenty-five cents.—TRANSLATOR.

upon the eve of going to Berlin to attend the session of the House of Lords.

Juliane attracted great attention in the aristocratic *salons* of Berlin, as well as at court, by the charms of her appearance and manners. She became a great belle; but among all the young cavaliers that promenaded with her through the halls and intensely enjoyed the fresh readiness of her repartee, there was not one that seemed to approach her with more serious intentions. They found the little countess "charming," "piquant," "stylish," everything in the world; but the well-known fact that the niece of the very wealthy Prince von Eyckhof was herself the possessor only of an insignificant fortune lent to the manner of the young men who swarmed about her an air of reserve that made the prince and princess quite uneasy, but the proud Juliane indignant. She made no secret of her feelings, and by the rude informality of her conversation she gained the reputation of being quite an intellectual, but by no means a very affable young woman. The young men became more and more reserved, and showed evident uneasiness in the presence of the "little black devil," as they called her.

Juliane did not object to this at all. She had always preferred the society of older and maturer men, and always declared that in intercourse with young people she became stupid, that she could not make the slightest thing out of what they said, and never knew what she ought to say to them.

How much more pleasant it was to her to chat with Count von Iseneck, whom she had met at her first ball in Berlin, at the house of Baron von Heddersdorf, and whom during the course of the winter she saw at almost all the entertainments she attended—how much more pleasant it was to converse with this clever, this eminent man, than with all the young coxcombs, who wearied her with their commonplaces and their follies!

What difference did it make that Count von Iseneck was already in the middle of the fifties, and consequently about thirty-five well-told years older than she? She did not think about his certificate of birth when she was sitting by him, looking at him with her dark, glowing eyes. Behind her half-opened lips her milk-white teeth became more visible than usual when she was listening to him; and she felt a veritable amazement at the manner in which this man mastered, analyzed, and expanded every question that chanced to arise. She was proud that the count not only did not

scorn to enter upon a serious conversation with her—insignificant little creature that she was—but that he even openly sought occasion to do so ; that he never ridiculed any of her follies or mistakes, but, on the contrary, showed evident pleasure in explaining to her this thing and that, which, until then, had remained a hidden secret to her.

The count inspired respect in her also by his earnest and useful professional activity. He was very wealthy, and might, like many others, have spent his days free from care in agreeable inactivity. And yet to-day, when his years would have warranted him, at least, in circumscribing his labors, he worked from early morning till late in the evening, vying with the youngest and most dilligent of his officers in assiduity. He occupied one of the most distinguished judicial offices in the empire. Presiding Justice Albrecht, Count von Iseneck, was an actual privy councilor, solicitor-general for the crown, and, by His Majesty's most gracious favor, a member of the House of Lords for the term of his natural life. On account of his distinguished mental gifts, his deep sense of justice, and his unflinching fidelity, he was held in universal esteem. His personal appearance likewise, in spite even of his years, was well calculated to captivate a sensible though much younger woman.

The count, who, in his youth, had belonged to the cuirassiers of the guard, had an imposing figure, broad shoulders, and was tall, and held himself as straight as an arrow. The erect and proud position of his head betrayed a certain self-consciousness, and showed that for years he had had to do not with superiors, but only with subordinates ; that he had no orders to receive, but only commands to give. He had the head of a Cæsar—a high, reflective brow, covered with short, slightly gray, but still abundant hair ; clear, very bright, sharp eyes ; quite a large aquiline nose ; thick, firm lips ; and a round, rather prominent chin. He wore no beard.

Count von Iseneck had been a widower for twenty years. His wife, the beautiful daughter of a poor and insignificant officer, with whom he had fallen passionately in love, and whom he had married against the unanimous protest of his family, he had lost under very tragic circumstances when they had been married scarcely a year. She had met her death on an expedition to the mountains they had undertaken in company with others. Count Albrecht had been deeply grieved, but spoke to no one concerning his grief. He withdrew more and more from society, buried himself in his

work, and no longer lived for anything but the duties of his profession and his office. It was not until recent years, when he had already entered upon the fifties, that people thought they noticed a change in his shy habits.

He began now to take a more active part in the diversions of society. While heretofore he had only accepted such invitations as he regarded as commands—that he did not think, from official considerations, he ought to refuse—and never remained longer in the parlor than he considered absolutely necessary, he would now often remain for hours at a time at entertainments, converse with much animation with the ladies, look at the dancers, and perhaps occasionally take part in a game of whist. He had become a frequent visitor of the theatre and frequented concerts; but the intensely earnest, even severe expression in his countenance had not disappeared. No one had ever seen him laugh. Agreeable, in the usual superficial sense of the term, he had never been, nor did he now become so. His whole character was the negation of all harmless levity.

Prince Eyckhof and Princess Carola had often expressed astonishment that Juliane found so much that was attractive in this elderly, awe-inspiring, and reticent man. The prince was beyond measure surprised, when one day, about noon, he received a visit from his old friend Count Albrecht, and heard from him his determination to lastingly bind the fresh, young Juliane to him in the bonds of matrimony, if the young girl were inclined to accept his proposal, as he hoped and believed she was.

The prince, who was five years younger than Count Albrecht, listened to his old, experienced, and worldly-wise friend, to whom he had so often turned for advice, with the belief that he need not call his attention to the extraordinary and dangerous nature of such a connection. The few, well-considered words with which Count Albrecht made known his intentions left no room for doubt but that the count had carefully considered all this, that the strong contrasts did not frighten him, that the differences of age, of characters, of opinions, and tastes, did not cause him any uneasiness.

"I will speak to Juliane, or rather, my wife will relieve me of this duty, for women understand such matters better than we do," said the prince, pressing Albrecht's hand. "You shall hear from us to-day or at latest to-morrow."

The prince talked with Carola, and Carola talked with Juliane,

who was already prepared for the unexpected surprise, and had no other reply to make than, "Rather the count than any other!" She smiled in a charmingly frivolous manner peculiar to her at all the objections that her Aunt Carola considered it her duty to raise, and finally impetuously threw her arms around her motherly friend, and closed her mouth with a kiss.

An hour later, Count Albrecht received from the prince an invitation to dinner, and the next day the following double notice was sent out to several hundred addresses :

"Engelbert, Prince of Eyckhof-Menthin and Princess Carola, *née* Countess Wiking, have the honor of announcing, in the usual manner, the engagement of their niece Juliane Countess Wiking to His Excellency the Actual Privy Councilor and Presiding Justice Albrecht Count von Iseneck.

"CASTLE MENTHIN AND BERLIN, *December 4th, A. D. 1874.*"

And :

"Juliane Countess Wiking. Albrecht Count von Iseneck. Engaged.

"CASTLE MENTHIN AND BERLIN, *December 4th, 1874.*"

This engagement formed the greatest surprise of the winter ; it was the "event" of society, and in the parlors, along the Thiergarten, in Wilhelm, Vosz, and Behren Streets, and on Pariser Platz scarcely anything else was discussed the whole day long.

It can not be said that these commentaries were always especially friendly ; on the contrary, they almost always had a slightly mocking tone, and, for the first time, little jests were made about the presiding justice, whose whole personality was as little adapted to jesting and ridicule as it was possible to be. But the congratulations that poured in from all sides upon the engaged couple and their princely relatives, were without exception clothed in the most happy and hearty language.

Now, at this time, at an industrial exposition that was meeting with the most satisfactory success, there was upon exhibition a work of art for which no one had a deeper understanding, nor felt a more sincere admiration than Countess Juliane. It was a wonderfully faithful and most artistically executed copy of a magnificent old historical piece of lace-work, with which Juliane had long been familiar from descriptions and representations, one of the earliest and

at the same time most masterly pieces of lace-workmanship—a long mantel, which Count Lamoral von Egmont had presented to the Infanta Philip, afterward King Philip II of Spain, in the year 1554, upon the occasion of his marriage to Mary of England, as the proudest witness to the Brabantine art of lace-making. The original, under the name of the “Lamoral lace,” a name that originated in the sixteenth century, was now in the famous Kypsteiner collection, the deceased Prince Günther von Engernheim had founded and raised to importance in the history of art. Prince Günther had purchased the “Lamoral” about forty years ago at an auction in Brussels for quite a large sum, but one that, in comparison to the real and inestimable value of this unique work of art was very small.

The fact that this lace had been sold for a sum so small had its special explanation.

Around the “Lamoral,” as around so many other valuable heir-looms, had been formed a circle of traditions. There was ascribed to it an inexplicable and fatal power. It was asserted that it brought to its possessor disgrace and death, that it would urge him on fatally to interfere in the conjugal happiness of others, and that in so doing he would meet his death.

No one knew when or how the “Lamoral” passed out of the possession of the Spanish crown into private hands. In the middle of the last century it had belonged to a duchess in Provence, whose husband, it seems, had certainly not been blind to the charms of another beautiful woman, and who was taken unawares by her husband and murdered. At that time originated the saying in rhyme, which ever afterward was connected with the history of the “Lamoral”:

“Dentelle Lamoral,
Ecrasse la morale,
Puis donne la mortál,
Adultère fatal.”

This saying, that, as a matter of fact, proved nothing else than that even in the last century worthless plays upon words were reduced to vicious verse, formed the basis of the superstition that was now to cleave to the innocent lace. The legend, regardless of the facts of history, now reached further back and declared that Philip’s unfortunate son Don Carlos, had been baptized in this lace garment, and that in this way the curse of his tragic love and his cruel

end had fallen upon him. Apart from all other considerations, this was untenable for the reason that Don Carlos, who was born to Philip by his first wife in the year 1545, was already nine years old when Count Lamoral Egmont presented the lace to the infanta at his second marriage.

Since that family catastrophe in Provence hundreds of years had passed, the "Lamoral" had changed its owner often enough, and nothing had occurred to authenticate in any manner the fatal influence attributed to it by the rhythmic tradition; the old, almost forgotten story was then revived by an accident. In the year 1832 the owner of the "Lamoral" fell in a duel, by the hand of an insulted husband. Such a thing happens, as is well known, several times in the course of a century. Now, however, the fanciful report of this strange but, of course, purely accidental coincidence, which did not require the co-operation of either heavenly or devilish agencies, attracted universal attention. Out of the two murdered adulterers came forth a half-dozen. The newspapers came into possession of the story, and at length the fable became generally spread abroad that all owners of the "Lamoral" were, by fate, destined to encroach upon the happiness of other persons' marriages, and in doing so to lose body and soul. At any rate, the descendants of the man that had perished in the duel shared this superstition, and made every effort to rid themselves of this fatal lace as quickly as possible, and at any price. Prince Günther von Engernheim-Kypstein was a man absolutely free from all prejudices; besides, his character and his temperament were a safeguard to him against the curse of the "Lamoral." He at once sent his representative to Brussels; and as superstition had frightened back a great many who would otherwise have appeared to bid against him, and as the merchants had also become shy on account of the great difficulty of selling the lace under such circumstances, he obtained it for a comparatively ridiculously small sum. It formed, from this time on, the chief ornament of the Kypstein collection, and behaved itself there in the most astonishing way without inflicting upon its happy owner any manner of injury to his body or soul. Prince Günther died forty years later quietly in his bed.

As Juliane was going through the exposition upon the arm of her betrothed and saw for the first time the copy of the "Lamoral," she was, as it were, enchanted. She could not tear herself away from this masterpiece, upon which doubtless a life-time of the most

laborious and neatest work had been expended. She found out and praised points about it that the learned count could not understand. She expressed in moving words her delight over this "shading in threads," as she said, that for her had somewhat of the effect of the enchantingly charming blending of one of Rembrandt's sketches. The count listened to her with a smile upon his face. Even if he were unable to share in the enthusiasm of his betrothed, not even to understand her, yet he now knew how he could bestow upon her a true and lasting means of happiness. The expensive copy of the "*Lamoral*" was his engagement present. Juliane was almost beside herself with delight. Although during the first few days that followed her engagement serious, but scarcely acknowledged occurrences that agreed with the warning representations which her Aunt Carola had made to her and with that which all the world was thinking and saying about the match had forced themselves involuntarily and irresistibly upon her, too; yet she knew that she was indebted to the count for the greatest joy of her life, she was grateful to him from the depths of her heart, and she persuaded herself that she loved him.

True, he was entirely different from her. But he was so kind! She was standing upon the threshold of life; he had well advanced into it, and was not far distant from its end. It was incumbent upon her alone—this she felt plainly—to smooth the great inequalities that existed between them. His whole character had been molded and made firm in accordance with the bent of his own will, by force of years and habit, and she must adapt herself to him.

The necessary good resolutions she had made, but did she possess the requisite qualities and power of subordination for carrying them out?

She was a spoiled child that up to the present time had always had her own way. Her kind-hearted relatives, who had been over-indulgent with her from her childhood up, often practiced forbearance toward her bad humors; they always forgave her on account of her irresistible drollness. They even made excuses for her naughtiness and for her unreasonable displays of temper, and found an indulgent explanation for them in her overflowing spirits, which worked in her like young fermenting wine.

The count had only known her for a few weeks, and, according to the nature of their circumstances, this acquaintance had of necessity remained a superficial one. They had met each other at

the various balls, had conversed a great deal, and spoken, also, about more serious subjects than usually form the topic of conversation upon social occasions; he had called upon her at the prince's house as often as it was possible for him to do so without its becoming conspicuous, had felt sincere pleasure and enjoyment in the brightness and freshness of the vivacious girl, and experienced a feeling of pleasurable vanity in the consciousness that this young woman, who had scarcely laid aside her child's garments, seemed to find special pleasure in intercourse with him, an elderly and serious man. More intimate subjects had perhaps been touched upon between them at moments when they were unobserved; and they had doubtless persuaded themselves that they agreed, and that they had told each other everything. But, on the very day after their engagement, Juliane had to acknowledge to herself secretly that they had a great deal yet to accomplish, that she was still a stranger to the count, to whom she was to belong the rest of her life, and that he, too, was a great deal further from her than she had believed. A slight incident convinced her of the truth of this.

The vivacity of her whole nature showed itself also in her manner of expressing herself. Juliane, without being conscious of it, selected by preference strong terms, and to some extent abused the use of the superlative. Her aunt and uncle had become so accustomed to this peculiarity that they no longer noticed it. The count, however, soon after their engagement called his betrothed's attention to this fact in the most delicate manner and only in the most general terms, declaring that the excessive use of the superlative in ordinary conversation was just as improper and intolerable as the shrieking and howling of a singer. Juliane understood him very well, and she felt the remark as an offensive reproof. She thought about it again when she had retired and put out the candle.

"He still knows me only very slightly," she said to herself; "he will certainly find a great deal in me to criticise,"

But her sanguine disposition helped her over all grounds of hesitancy. She had told her Aunt Carola the whole truth—she liked the count better than any one else! And he certainly loved her. What else could have induced this distinguished man to bring forth from her hiding-place an insignificant, spoiled, and frequently also unmannerly little creature like herself—for she was not at all blind to her own defects—an inexperienced, saucy little thing, that

knew almost nothing of the world, a spoiled girl with pretensions, and yet without fortune—what else but true love could have induced the presiding justice to seek out her of all others, and lay at her feet all that he possessed—his large fortune, his high position, his name of purest fame—everything, his past, his present, his future?

Of course he loved her! she had proof of it! Let fools childishly ridicule it; it was only because they did not understand the matter at all! She alone knew that none but a lover could have prophetically penetrated into the deepest corner of her heart, and there read her most ardent, most secret desire. Those who were unacquainted with her could have no conception what joy the count had bestowed upon her. She could hardly realize it herself. At the thought of it she became as it were intoxicated. Oh! the "*Lamoral*"! It really and truly belonged to her; she could spread it out upon a dark background and rejoice in the wonderful beauty of its design and of its execution at any time and always, forever! She might adorn herself with it—if she desired to—all alone in her room, with her door closed, in front of her large glass. She was so selfish that she did not wish to let any one share her great joy. Her treasure would only be profaned by the glances of those who did not understand it. That which she could now call her own—she only knew how to appreciate it fully and completely!

In the castle chapel at Menthin, Count Albrecht von Iseneck and Countess Juliane Wiking were married in the early days of February, 1875. Juliane wore a plain white satin dress upon which the "*Lamoral*" was draped in accordance with the strict rules of taste. She looked enchantingly beautiful with a wreath of myrtles in her luxurious, shining, blue-black hair, and her delicate figure wrapped in an airy cloud of lace.

The wedding trip lasted scarcely three weeks. Count Albrecht did not think that it was consistent with his official and political duties to take a longer leave of absence, as there were now important matters in his office to be attended to, and also weighty legislation was soon to be expected. Juliane could not understand the necessity of their having to leave Paris so soon, whose beauties she was now admiring for the first time. There was still so much to be seen! And she had been so happy here!

At the ball at the Embassy, where she had made some of the most interesting acquaintances, she had also had an opportunity of wearing her "*Lamoral*" lace, this time gracefully draped over a

mallow-colored dress ; and she noticed the attention her toilet attracted and the gentle exclamations of delight that were made by connoisseurs. She became, on account of her piquant beauty and the charming peculiarity of her manner, the object of much homage, and in the report of the ball published the next morning in the "Figaro" she was, above all others, mentioned, in the most complimentary manner, as a striking beauty and a most intellectual woman.

She did not care a great deal about these compliments, about this description of her person, this comparison of her eyes to "scorching and dazzling suns" ; but that this Parisian society journal should sing a really enthusiastic dithyramb about her lace dress, should depict the artistic work with the accuracy of an official recorder and the tenderness of a lover, made her proud and happy ; and she felt the keenest joy at the error, which was presumably shared in by all, and which now had almost become authoritative by virtue of the confirmation of this very widely circulated sheet—that her copy had been taken for the original "Lamoral" lace, and was praised as a "celebrated historical piece of lace of the sixteenth century," as "the queen of lace." She prudently took care not to correct this error, to which she herself, perhaps, had lent encouragement by means of ambiguous phrases.

Yes, indeed, the original "Lamoral" lace was still in existence, buried in a collection at the far-away castle of Kypstein, in a private collection that was probably in the course of a year not seen by a dozen curious individuals ; and among this dozen there was certainly scarcely a single one who could appreciate and value the Brabantine queen of laces with the eye of a connoisseur. She must see the real "Lamoral" sooner or later ! And the castle of Kypstein lay, she well knew, within an accessible distance. But she must not think of the original. The magnificent copy, that was in beauty scarcely inferior to the original, made her too happy. And this younger "Lamoral" belonged to her, to her alone !

"So you are in earnest about leaving Paris?" she asked the count, when he ordered his hotel bill to be prepared for the following day, and instructed his valet to pack the trunks.

"Of course," replied the count, somewhat surprised ; "in solemn earnest !"

He had said so, and could not comprehend how there could be any doubt about it.

"But it is so delightful here!" continued the young countess, ingenuously. "Let us stay here another week? One does not take a wedding trip but once—or several times—in one's life," she quickly corrected herself. "And the Government can get along without you for eight days longer, if it be necessary."

"We shall go! It can not be otherwise," replied the count, calmly.

Juliane became silent. At first she was a little out of humor, but then she thought about the pleasure she would have in arranging her new home in Berlin, and she was soon smiling again, as usual, trilling to herself, and gave her maid the necessary directions.

On the following evening they set out for Berlin.

CHAPTER II.

JULIANE'S NEW RESIDENCE IN THE WILHELMSTRASSE.—DIFFICULTIES BEGIN.

THE palace of Count von Iseneck was situated on Wilhelmstrasse.* Behind the handsome house, which had been built in the past century, but while in the hands of a wealthy speculator on the Exchange had been rebuilt and sold to the presiding justice after its owner had as suddenly lost as he had rapidly gained his fortune, extended a spacious park-like garden as far as the Thiergarten, which was shut off by a massive, high wall. A double gate, made of strong, high, pointed iron bars, and fastened with an American spring-lock that was opened by a small, flat, indented key, led into the Königgrätzerstrasse. This exit was seldom used.

The house itself consisted of two side buildings that extended as far as Wilhelmstrasse, forming the right and left boundary of a quadrilateral court, and of a lateral main building at the back of the court.

The domestics—with the exception of the gardener and his family, who occupied a small house in the garden—slept in the base-

* It seems scarcely necessary to say that "strasse" means street, but I deem it advisable to transcribe literally the names of these famous streets in Berlin, as they are uniformly so called by all foreigners, however meager may be their knowledge of the German language.—TRANSLATOR.

ments of the two side buildings ; to the left of the entrance the female domestics—the cook and her assistants, the two chambermaids, and the countess's maid, who occupied the handsomest room next to Wilhelmstrasse. On the right (opposite), were the male employés—the porter and his family nearest the entrance, the coachman and stable-boy, the second servant (usually called the "page"), and, finally, the count's valet, to whom was assigned the corresponding handsomest room next to the street. The windows of these two rooms, which projected above the pavement, were protected by an arched grating of wrought-iron.

The housekeeping apartments were located in the basement of the main building. On the ground floor of the right wing were the presiding justice's offices, which adjoined his study in the main building ; on the opposite side, on the ground floor of the left wing, were some company rooms that were rarely used, and a billiard-room that was never used. On the ground floor of the main building, on the side toward Wilhelmstrasse, were, in addition to the justice's study, a reception room for official visitors, and a dining-room.

The parterre rooms of the main building that faced the park were arranged as follows : On the right, adjoining the study, were the sleeping and dressing chambers of the count ; next to them, in the middle, was a large room in which the countess almost exclusively spent her time ; and adjoining this, on the left, was a dressing-room, with one window, in which stood an old fire-proof safe. In this Juliane kept her valuable ornaments, her jewels, and her lace.

In the spacious middle room there was a broad double door between its two huge windows, that led out upon a large asphalt veranda, from which a broad stairway led down into the park, directly upon the main walk, which ran in a straight line toward the exit upon the Königgrätzerstrasse ; at this point ended also numerous winding side-walks that led in charmingly circuitous directions beneath the branches of ancient trees, from the palace to the Thiergarten.

In this large, bright room—the so-called "park room"—Juliane spent the greater part of the day and the entire night. In a special place, separated from the rest of the room by a high Spanish partition, and surrounded by heavy *portières*, stood her bed ; there, near the window, stood her writing-tablet, not far from the garden-

door; in the middle of the room a magnificent Steinway piano, her wedding present from Princess Carola, who had especially ordered the expensive instrument from New York for the purpose of arousing the zeal of her very accomplished niece, though with little hope of success; near the other window stood a little table, upon which lay her lace-pillow, and a piece of lace-work which she had commenced, but which during the last few months had only increased a few inches. Besides these articles, the large room was filled with furniture, and other objects of various descriptions. On all sides there were delightful little corners. Artistic ornaments were standing all around. It was a singular chamber, uniting in itself everything that was unique and stylish, but in every respect homelike and charming, and producing, in its chaotic disorder, in the comic arbitrariness of its arrangement, and the accidental combinations of colors, on the whole a pleasing, aristocratic, and artistic effect.

The countess never liked to leave this delightful room, which she looked upon as her own special kingdom, and so she would receive here the more intimate friends of the family. It always cost her a special effort when she had to climb up-stairs, where the regular reception rooms and parlors were, with a magnificent high-pitched dancing-hall that extended the entire depth of the main building, from Wilhelmstrasse to the park.

Her room was, indeed, bright, but her life was not. On the contrary, it had turned out as unsatisfactory and painful for Juliane as it possibly could. The first germs of this unhappiness had appeared quite early—in fact during the short period of the engagement; and almost immediately after the marriage they had developed more noticeably and ominously.

The nineteen-year-old Juliane had always looked upon her marriage as the true beginning of life for her. She, of course, knew very well that she had not united herself to a wild young boy, to enjoy the mad follies of youth—and that she did not ask for at all—but she certainly thought that her husband would understand that her youth required light, gayety, and harmless amusements for the development of its natural impulses and bloom. From a fortunate community of intellectual and spiritual characteristics she had hoped, more than from anything else, for a removal of the opposing differences that existed between them, and about the existence of which she had never deceived herself. Seriousness of disposition had brought them together and made them feel sympathetically near

to each other; now, she imagined, cheerfulness would crown the work of sincere union. But in this she experienced the bitterest disappointment.

Juliane had not feared his age; her Uncle Engelbert was no longer a youth, and she had got along with him in every essential particular most excellently. He understood her thoroughly; they moved upon the same plane and, in spite of the great difference in their ages, they had about the same intellectual horizon. The count, however, had been and still remained—as she now ascertained for the first time—at an invincible distance from her. He stood above her, and did not make the slightest effort to descend to her. She wanted to begin life, and he was done with it.

What she was striving to attain he had long since reached and passed. She was full of desires, he was surfeited. She felt buoyant and longed for exertion, he was tired and needed rest.

She was vivacious, and he was serious, and this it was that made the yawning chasm between them impassable; for with this fundamental dissimilarity in the keynote of their characters, they were deprived of all means of reconciliation and of understanding each other.

Count Albrecht lived first of all, in fact lived almost exclusively for the strict performance of his duties; and the duties of his profession he did not consider performed at the close of business hours. Worn out, with heavy head, furrowed brow, and lips firmly compressed, he would meet his wife, who had just paid or received a visit, heard all the most recent society small-talk, and felt the urgent need of talking about it to some one else. He would scarcely hear her; he was thinking about something quite different, something more important; he, scarcely understanding the meaning of her words, would listen to her as to the foolish prattle of a child.

At first he controlled himself with great difficulty, and attempted to assume the same tone. But he soon became convinced that it was not worth his while to try, so he let his lively young wife talk on to herself and he remained inattentive.

But after familiarity resulting from long intercourse had removed all constraint, he made no attempt to conceal the fact that this prattle about all kinds of nonsense disturbed him and was disagreeable. He would sit with his wife, without changing his expression, like a marble statue, and Juliane plainly perceived—and it offended her—that her laughing was unpleasant to him. The sil-

very, clear tone of her voice, which when she was at Menthin had rejoiced her beloved relatives and always put them in a good humor, here seemed to act like a disagreeable sound; here, too, it sounded more hollow, and Juliane herself no longer took any pleasure in it. She began to forget how to laugh. She became inspired with dread, she was chilled by the stony coldness of the count. Thus she passed what to her was a long, dreary period as a silent sufferer.

One day, however, again upon a very small provocation, her pent up youth burst forth from its barriers. She became peevish, passionate, and spiteful. Her dark eyes filled with tears of indignation.

"You treat me badly!" she exclaimed, trembling with agitation. "You have deceived me—yes, I mean it—deceived me! If you have not already admitted it to yourself, then I must tell you so. I did not become your wife merely for the purpose of securing food and shelter, and of paying for it the dearest price—my happiness in life! my youth! I have higher claims upon you, and if you refuse to recognize them, as you have heretofore done, then you have abused my confidence. I will not sacrifice all my joy in life, I will not. And if you do not wish to make common cause with me, then I will myself take care that my interests do not suffer. You are an officer of justice! You would do well to trouble yourself less about justice in general, and pay stricter attention to that particular justice that concerns you and affects me!"

"I am afraid I have committed a fatal error," rejoined the presiding justice, after a long pause that he had purposely allowed to elapse, in order to give his wife time to become somewhat more composed. But she promptly continued:

"A sin!" she cried, raising her voice still higher. "You sinned against me in marrying me!"

"Then I shall certainly have to severely atone for it," rejoined the count, more deliberately and emphatically, as he withdrew from the room.

Shortly after six o'clock, when he was upon the point of closing his portfolio and preparing for dinner, the servant brought him a sealed note,

"I didn't wish to interrupt you," wrote Juliane. "Please excuse me for the rest of the day! Irene von Prosz came for me in her

coupé and begged me so urgently to come and console her in her grass-widowhood, that I could not refuse. I am going to take tea with her, and afterward we are going to the opera. Perhaps you will come for us.

JULIANE."

CHAPTER III.

THE GENUINE "LAMORAL."

THE president did, indeed, escort his wife from the opera. Juliane had almost hoped that he would reproach her on account of her willfulness. She had thought of so much more that she had wished to say to him and yet in her first excitement had forgotten. She waited for a fitting opportunity to rectify the omission. She waited in vain.

Juliane's words had made a deep impression upon him. He had to admit that she was right—even in the main thing. She was assuredly justified in making demands upon him that he had not fulfilled, which he could not fulfill without doing violence to his inmost being.

Alas ! that he should just have become conscious of this now—now, when it was too late ! Had he, then, wholly lost his senses ? He was ashamed of his incomprehensible blindness. To be sure, for twenty years he had constantly associated with none but grave men, and lived solely for his profession. During all this while he had hardly exchanged a word with a young girl. He had actually grown to be bashful, and was virtually a novice. And in this state of mind he had been bewitched by the first young girl into whose society he was thrown. The child-like frankness, the breezy unconventionality of that original character had charmed him ; in the glowing light of those dark, flashing eyes he became conscious of feelings that had stirred in his bosom in earlier life, but had long since been choked by the dust of legal documents. He pictured to himself the joyless solitude of his laborious and uneventful existence, and memory revived in all their brightness the hours of happiness—all too brief—which he had passed in company with the wife so quickly torn from his side. And thus the thought of a union with Juliane took root within him, and grew until it at-

tained over him a complete ascendancy ere he had weighed the consequences of his determination.

Now this young wife was lastingly chained to him, and now he felt that he had grown to be an old man, much older than his baptismal record evidenced. He had supposed that he would be warmed by the sunny spring that she would bring into his house, and, instead of that, he now began to realize how thoroughly chilled had become his heart and soul. Let him exert himself as he would, he could have no feeling in common with her. She only disturbed him in his confirmed habits. He had all at once to take things into consideration that were perfectly indifferent to him; it made him morose to hear her laugh, because he himself never laughed, and had less desire to do so now than ever before. He had to talk when he wanted to be silent, to go out when he preferred to stay at home, and wait when he wanted to go. His wife was always in his way! His marriage had by no means made of him a family man; on the contrary, he was nothing but a wedded bachelor.

He had at first shrunk from the admission that he was the principal, nay, the sole guilty party, and had done his wife sore injustice. But, when Julianne, in a sudden effervescence of resentment, hurled in his face the very accusation that he had been obliged to pronounce against himself, however unwillingly, he had been fair enough to both Julianne and himself not to clear himself from blame through the superiority of his dialectics; he simply made the resolve that it should be different.

But how? His nature no longer possessed the pliability of youth; it had grown rigid, and no longer admitted of being bent and inclined at pleasure. Should he attempt to make Julianne adapt herself to peculiarities that had become confirmed in him through old age? He would hardly have succeeded in this. And if he did succeed, he would only be convicted of the very sin which Julianne had laid to his charge, and be found, in truth, to have cheated her out of her youth and the pleasures of existence.

Well, then, if they could not be one, if they dared not separate, they could move along side by side. There was nothing else left.

Instinctively Julianne had adopted the right course when, in order to avoid the awkward consequences of that violent scene with him, she had gone her own way, and, in company with another young married lady, had tried to forget it in so far as she could. Hence

not a word of reproach crossed his lips. He wanted her to understand that he had no objection whatever to her seeking such gratifications as she longed after, and to which she had asserted her just claims; only she must not ask him to share in those gratifications. He would willingly concede to her the most far-reaching liberties, with no other limit than those which are prescribed by our ideas of morality and honor. Thereby he hoped to mitigate, at least, since he could not remedy, the evil that he had already done.

Without one word having been exchanged between this married couple as to their relations to one another, they had silently come to a mutually clear understanding on the subject.

Juliane very soon felt that she was her own mistress, and sought to adjust her life to its new conditions. It cost her a severe struggle, however, to submit. It wounded her pride that the marriage should be nothing else than a gross falsehood, maintained only out of respect to the world. In truth, it was no marriage; it was only the enforced living together of an old bachelor and a lively widow.

It did not at all satisfy her that she could do and leave undone whatever she chose. The unlimited use of her freedom was even burdensome to her; she would have much preferred to feel that the reins were under the guidance of another hand. She regularly laid her plans so as to force the count again to interpose his authority with an energetic hand. She made lavish expenditures on her dress; she gave entertainments without notifying her husband beforehand; she accepted invitations without his cognizance. But the count paid her bills without wasting a word on them, received her guests in the most polite way, and, when he did not act as Juliane's escort to parties, excused himself on one plea or the other.

Juliane now became unreasonably irritable, and was easily provoked. She was whimsical and capricious. The count disarmed her by his exalted calmness and patience. For the sake of peace, he yielded to her on all points, and thus little Juliane's will was virtually the law of the house. She was conscious of her power, and lorded it like a very despot.

The count found this acceptable. He had well-nigh recovered his former independence, and was not disposed to complain of the little annoyances imposed upon him by her maintenance. With renewed zeal he devoted himself afresh to his official duties, went earlier than of old to his cabinet, and came back later. It was extremely desirable for him—in consequence of a change of administration—

to manifest an activity that often took him from home, and sometimes detained him for a long time. From these official trips, which occasioned him manifold exertions and high satisfaction in his calling, he invariably returned home physically and mentally refreshed.

The world sees a great deal, and guesses still more than it sees. Although Count Albert and Juliane, independently of each other, had seriously set themselves to conceal the truth as to their relationship, and to give an obvious explanation of whatever might seem peculiar, it was well known in their circle that their marriage was not such as it ought to be. Nobody wondered at this; all had foreseen that it would turn out so! And, as a matter of course, the world justified youth and beauty.

It was deemed quite natural that the charming young countess should be a bit coquettish, and allow court to be paid her by young men, who were much bolder and more demonstrative in their attentions than they would have ventured to be toward the young girl two or three winters ago. And she, too, dared to be much more unconstrained in her manners. Occasionally she was too unconstrained. But, what of it? She was so young, and her husband so old!

And the very circumstance that she was so uniformly gracious, that she smiled as sweetly upon the young lawyer Von Dürnborn as upon Prince Ulrich von Engernheim, and gave the civilian Von Berwitz a glance just as bewitching as the one she bestowed upon the slender dragoon Count von Pagger—this was exactly what exempted her from any malicious comment. Moreover, the whole community had imbibed a most decided impression that it would not be prudent to cast aspersions upon any one identified with the Count von Iseneck. Hence, nobody dared to slander or malign a woman who bore his name.

It could not have escaped the president's sharp eye, upon his return from a business trip of much longer duration than usual, that a great change had passed over his wife. He had left a self-willed, excitable, unjust little woman, and found instead a being patient, amiable, and easy to please.

This perception affected him less pleasurably than as furnishing matter for reflection. He sought an explanation of it, but found none. Suspicion, verily, was astir within him, and he became more circumspect. But nothing justified him in a suspicion that must have injured both his wife and himself at the most sensitive point.

In society Juliane was just as careless, gay, and coquettish as ever; at home she had become more amiable. She had probably become convinced that she was embittering her own life by her domineering whims. The count, therefore, had no ground for disquiet, and afterward, as before, could devote his full energies to the service of the empire.

Intercourse between the two was not at all altered as to essentials. It had improved only in so far as that previously rather violent scenes had been brought about by Juliane's excessive irritability, and now they seldom or hardly ever occurred.

Both had gradually taken the measure one of the other; they knew exactly how much, or better, how little they had to expect of one another. They met regularly only at meals in the dining-room. It had been months since the count had entered the countess's large park chamber, where she read French novels, opened her Steinway piano half a dozen times in the course of a day in order to close it again in five minutes, wrote her letters, received her more intimate acquaintances, worried herself over the lace which she had begun but not touched for ever so long, dreamed at the window, and slept of a night. He was busied with work, and she amusing herself in her own way, as best she could.

Among the younger gentlemen who visited her, the Councilor of Legation von Berwitz and the young Prince von Engernheim-Kypstein were especially congenial; the councilor of legation, because he knew everything that was going on in Berlin society, and talked over it with her, in a bright and never ill-natured manner; because he showed her a thousand little attentions, and took every opportunity of letting her know, in most delicate manner, that he had conceived for her a more than superficial regard; the prince, at first, to be sure, only because he was the lord of Kypstein, possessor of the famous collection of antiquities, owner of the genuine antique "Lamoral" lace.

She had started from amazement when two years before—in the winter of 1877—at a ball given by Baron von Heddersdorf, she had been introduced by her husband to His Highness Prince Ulrich von Engernheim-Kypstein. She had been so much affected and so unable to control her feelings that she had been obliged to explain her behavior. She simply told the prince the truth—that she was a perfect enthusiast on the subject of lace, owned the imitation of the famous "Lamoral" lace, and, naturally, had been very much

surprised and overcome by finding herself in the presence of the fortunate owner of the original.

The prince took his seat beside her, and they had hardly been conversing over a minute together before he had volunteered to gratify one of her most ardent wishes that she would never have dared to give expression to.

"Yes, indeed, the 'Lamoral'!" said the prince, with a melancholy smile. "I have it, together with many another thing that my good father accumulated with fine discernment and unwearied zeal for his most unworthy son, who has not the slightest interest in all the old trumpery! If it would be of the least interest to you to compare your lace with the original, it would give me the greatest pleasure to have it sent to you."

"What! You would really?" asked Julianne, with beaming eyes, while her usually sallow cheeks were tinged with a rich glow.

"Of course, with the sincerest delight! I shall feel really grateful if you will empower me so to do. I shall be gratified to have proof for once that such a collection is good for something, and something more than common; for as such I esteem the privilege of giving a little enjoyment to a beautiful young lady. To-morrow morning I'll write a few lines to the custodian of the museum, and at the close of the week, with your gracious permission, I shall do myself the honor of laying at your feet the genuine old 'Lamoral.'"

"You are too polite, my prince! You do not know what a delight you are preparing for me—you *can not* know! I shall not deprive you long of your costly possession—only for a few days."

"Your most obedient. But let me entreat you to keep it just as long as is agreeable. I shall not miss it; I have never even given a good look at it. I only know that it is there."

"Oh, how is that possible?"

"You take me for a barbarian, I dare say, dear madame. Well, I must quietly submit to such a sentence. But I admit that I have an unconquerable aversion to bogus panes of glass through which one can not see; to skins on the floor over which one stumbles; to carved masks that grin at you; and brass heraldic lions in impossible attitudes, that stick out their tongues at you. I believe they call it, nowadays, the 'Renaissance' and 'good style'—that most objectionable remodeling of our language. My good father would turn over in his grave if he could hear his degenerate son talking thus. As you have probably heard, he was

a collector as enthusiastic as expert, and it is by no fault of his that I have not inherited something of his taste and skill. Oh, dear! how much dust I used to have to swallow in my childhood, when those great boxes were unpacked! And how stupid I used to feel while my good father would be descanting to me upon the merits of an embossed metal beaker, an old spoon, broken and cemented, a wooden saint with the color washed off his face, with features distorted, in an absurd attitude, with one foot and one finger and a half, or old worm-eaten tissues grown yellow from age! This I have never understood, do not understand now, and never expect to understand; and nothing but reverence for my father and the recollection that the very happiest hours of his lonely life were spent upon his collection, have hindered me from long since scattering all the rubbish to the four winds of heaven, and supplying its place by things brand new. I shall see that the "Lamoral" is brought to you, and I lay a wager beforehand that your modern imitation is much more beautiful than the original antique."

Juliane was horrified at this reckless candor. How could the prince speak so slightly of this unique work of art? What a pity that it should have fallen into the hands of one so unappreciative!

Nevertheless the prince had made a very pleasing impression upon her, and this impression was not injured by the reputation which preceded him, viz., that he united with astonishing earnestness in work and uncommon capacity for work the lightest spirits and most outspoken fondness for "wine, woman, and song." This favorable impression was deepened by the fact that he kept his word. During the afternoon hours of the following Friday, Prince Ulrich paid a visit to the Countess Juliane, and brought with him the genuine "Lamoral" lace.

Juliane's excitement prevented her from closing her eyes that night. She was incessantly tormented by the unconquerable apprehension that the "Lamoral" might be stolen from her, although there was not the slightest justification for such an apprehension. The genuine "Lamoral" was hidden away, alongside of its imitation, in the iron press that stood in the dressing-room that was only separated from her chamber by a thin, tapestried door; and at night there always lay in front of this press Nero, a powerful, pearl-gray dog from Ulm, so trained that it would be as much as a man's life was worth to come near the press with ill intent while he was present.

But, for all this, Juliane had a dread of thieves.

CHAPTER IV.

A CASE OF TRUE LOVE.

PRINCE ULRICH VON ENGERNHEIM, Lord of Biesingen and Kypstein, whose birth had cost his mother her life, was two-and-twenty years old when he lost his father, Prince Gunther, and entered upon his inheritance. A greater contrast was hardly imaginable than that presented by this father and son; and yet the two were linked together by a bond of touching tenderness. Prince Gunther was proud of his representative, who possessed, in full measure, the qualities that nature had denied to him; and in the sincerest, heartiest manner Ulrich loved his noble father, from whom he had never heard a harsh word, and had received nothing but goodness in superfluity.

Prince Gunther had been a tall, narrow-chested, weakly man, awkward and embarrassed in intercourse with strangers, a friend to solitude, and, we may say, unsociable. He had always lived apart from the world, in quiet retirement, at the old castle of Kypstein, and hardly knew any other pleasure than the continually renewed one supplied him by his well-tended estate, and that which accrued from the inception, perfection, and strictly scientific arrangement of his self-made collection of antiquities. In the domain of art-work of the Renaissance he had been recognized as a first authority thirty years in advance of the period when the artistic and industrial creations of that age became fashionable. He had begun to collect when a mere youth, and he had died while negotiations were pending for the acquisition of a costly vase.

Prince Ulrich mourned truly and deeply over the departure of his mild and quiet father. But his youth and its imperious demands soon again forced him out into gay life, from which he had withdrawn for the space of a few months. He had then studied at Bonn, was among the Prussians, and his reputation as one of the most distinguished of that corps of students was firmly established throughout all Kösemer, E. S. He was a famous duelist, a master in all gymnastic exercises. He was invincible at the *kneipe*-table, never lost his presence of mind, and in all the disputes that arose between the different corps displayed the greatest acumen and perfect tact. The rashest pranks were reported as

originating from him, and, although, to be sure, only the smaller part of these were true, yet there was enough left to perfectly justify the nickname of "Mad Ulrich," which had been bestowed upon him at Heidelberg by the Saxo-Bonissians, which had followed him to Bonn with the Bonissians, and gone with him, still later, to Berlin.

In spite of all the pranks that he had played, Ulrich had not wasted his time, and had worked very hard, particularly during the last *semester*. He had stood his first law examination with brilliant success, and in the winter of 1877 had made his assessor examination even with distinction, at the same time that he made the acquaintance of Countess Juliane von Iseneck.

Prince Ulrich had the frame of a giant, lacking only rather more than an inch of being six feet high. He had a well-developed chest, and strong, muscular arms. In a dress-coat, he acted as it were an anachronism; one could hardly think of him but in military array. He wore his thin, ashen-hued locks cut short, and no razor had ever come upon his full, soft beard, which was of a rather lighter color. He had clear, bluish-gray eyes, with a very intelligent and yet kindly expression. There was something distinguished in his bearing, and the impression made by his appearance was altogether pleasing. He was one of the few people who succeed in pleasing equally both men and women.

But he suffered from an hereditary infirmity which, however little it was observed by others, inwardly vexed him deeply, because it hindered him from devoting himself to the soldier's calling, to which he was ardently addicted.

In the princely family of Engernheim from time immemorial there had shown itself a peculiarity, which was ever recurring—like the Bourbon wart, the small skull of the Hapsburgs, the Montmorency squint—sometimes at longer sometimes at shorter intervals, coming down at times from father to son, sometimes skipping several generations, now stronger, then weaker. This was an unusual formation and consequent weakness of the left foot. The family archives of the Engernheims, as early as the thirteenth century, designated a valiant knight as "Archibald the lame." Ulrich's grandfather, too, whose name he had inherited, the father of Prince Gunther, had suffered from a malformation—and a very decided one—of the left foot. In young Ulrich this hereditary peculiarity appeared in a very modified form, showing itself only in a certain weakness of the foot, which was perceptible only upon close obser-

vation of his gait. He drew his left foot after him a little, rather dragging it. He had the art of concealing this so well that his intimate friends, even, were never struck by it, and thus his vanity had not suffered any shock in consequence; but, nevertheless, he grieved over it secretly, for it was this physical infirmity that had determined him to choose a different calling from the one that he sighed after.

He had acquiesced, however, in the irrevocable, and had not anything to complain of really. A brilliant future lay before him, bathed in sunshine. Through his high birth, his immense fortune, his attractive person, his clear understanding, thorough education, and aptitude for business, he was fitted for the highest honors; he seemed as if cut out for a future ambassador.

From this culmination, meanwhile, he was still far distant. He was working, at present, as youngest assistant in the Office for Foreign Affairs, in order to be introduced into the mode of conducting diplomatic affairs, under the guidance of the most capable of officers, and also becoming acquainted with the minutiae of the service. About a year had thus passed, during which time Prince Ulrich visited a great deal in families of his own rank and also at the house of Count Iseneck.

The matter, of course, did not rest there. The "Mad Ulrich" of Heidelberg and Bonn had not been transformed overnight into a moral and model young man. This was a little too much to expect of one just five-and-twenty years old. He led a merry life, such as young people of his age usually do, and his social position was not at all affected by this fact. He acknowledged frankly certain of his *liaisons*, but his intimate friends suspected, however, and apparently with reason, that he never spoke of the more significant half of his adventures. Meanwhile he often vanished, tracklessly, from the circle of his friends. The curious then sought in vain for his place of sojourn. He had a decided way of repelling all attempts to gain from him information on this point, and it was remarked that in this matter he neither jested nor suffered himself to be jested with by others.

When in December, 1878, he left Berlin and became an *attaché* of the embassy to the Hague, many tears were shed over him by light and dark eyes, openly and in secret. And it was hard for himself to go away from Berlin.

The following summer, at Scheveningen, he renewed his ac-

quaintance with Prince Engelbert von Eyckhof and Princess Carola, gaining an introduction, also, to the fascinating Princess Alix.

Alix was at that time sixteen years old. She was as pretty as a picture; the blossom of young girlhood had just expanded from the bud of childhood. She was all sweetness, freshness, and loveliness. It is true that some of the awkwardness of childhood was occasionally perceptible in her movements, but there was a certain charm and attractiveness even in this. There is beauty in everything that is young. And she herself laughed heartily at her awkwardness. She was already of medium height, and had not stopped growing; her waist and shoulders were plump, her hands and feet not particularly small, but marvelously well shaped. Nobody paid any heed to this, however; all who looked at Alix saw nothing but her eyes—those soulful, radiant, deep-blue orbs, that looked abroad so freely and joyously, as though they had never been dimmed and rendered lusterless by grief. Everybody who talked with her and met the straightforward, merry glance of those blue eyes, unconsciously assumed a smiling expression. She had a full suit of soft, fine, brown hair. Her features were delicately chiseled, and her complexion had the fresh hue of perfect health. She blushed easily; whenever she felt the blood thus mount so suddenly to her cheeks she would be vexed; then she fairly would glow like a new-blown rose, and laugh at herself again.

Princess Alix was as charming in her manners as she was pretty. She showed herself just as she was, and since her dispositions were all naturally good, since her education had been superintended, in the most particular manner, by her affectionate mother, and she had never seen or heard anything evil, there was, indeed, no occasion for her imposing upon herself any self-restraint. She was not at all forward, but she talked openly and freely of whatever came into her mind; she was perfectly artless, and at times gave utterance to the most amusing nonsense, but in her unconscious purity never a word passed her lips that evil-mindedness itself could distort into what was of evil intent. She had the safeguard of a happy childhood and an existence so blessed that it had never known a privation, nor ever been corroded by care.

This charming young creature inspired Ulrich with a passion that was pure and ardent. He loved for the first time, as he had just found out. Scales, as it were, fell from his eyes. When pure, fervent love had penetrated his being, now, for the first time, he had

to admit that he had been perfectly deceived as to the nature of feelings formerly entertained by him—even for that one being who had been dearest to him, and attachment for whom had hitherto been his cherished secret, closely guarded from the whole world. Involuntarily, he had been acting a little farce before himself and that other person, having rather gratefully reciprocated than given spontaneously, it is true, and having felt himself forced, in justification of his actions, to exaggerate his feelings to fancied love.

But what he had formerly persuaded himself to feel, what he now recognized his sentiment to have been at that time, as tried in the light of sober judgment, how far removed was it from that feeling which now moved him of a truth, reaching to the very depths of his inmost being! How far apart were they—yes, as far as heaven is above earth!

Alix, now and forever Alix, and only Alix!

He thought only of her, he felt only for her, he was constantly attracted into her presence; if he were not near her, if he did not hear her voice, if he could not look into those unfathomable, radiant blue eyes, he felt a painful void, the whole world seemed bare and empty, and he was conscious of an ever-present, hungry yearning—an uncontrollable unrest. And she seemed to suspect nothing of all this; in intercourse with him she was innocent, unembarrassed, charming—yes, enchanting. But was she just the same with others? or, did she find a more serious pleasure in his society than that of others? Had he not deceived himself, when he remarked that her color deepened at his coming or going; and surely it could not be the result of sheer accident—since it could not have come so of itself, but rather needed her active co-operation—that they two undesignedly and invariably, at small family parties and in larger companies, came together for a cosy *tête-à-tête*?

He half-way hoped so, but hardly dared to believe it. And she was still so young, so perfectly inexperienced—almost a child, you may say! He dared not surprise her with the superior array of his experience, his adroitness; otherwise, he would long since have told her everything!

For he felt that he was free. He had to accuse himself of no breach of faith toward the past; nothing fettered him in the present. He had, to be sure, led no strict, conventual life, but his very worldly course of conduct had not, after all, been any worse than that of his fellows. He had blithely paid out the interest of his youthful fri-

volity, but the treasury of what was noblest and best that he possessed was as yet unconsumed. Now there was something soothing and comforting for him in the thought that, if occasionally he had unconsciously not done justice to himself, if he had fancied himself in love when young blood had only been rioting in his veins, now it soothed and comforted him to reflect that he had never dissembled toward any other person, had never tried to lure her by false professions, or deceitfully ensnared any victim whatsoever.

It pleased him now to recall that, oftentimes on account of his fickleness and apparent incapability of loving truly, there had been leveled against him bitter reproaches, which he had felt to be derogatory at the time, but which he had let pass without serious remonstrance.

Those sweet days, so rich in enjoyment, were drawing to their close, and the cruel order for departure had been given. Then, one evening, while he was walking along the beach by Princess Carola's side, and Alix, in her father's charge, was walking in front of them among a company of other people, Prince Ulrich suddenly took heart, and, surprising himself, said, without any preface :

"I have made up my mind, princess ! I love your daughter. Allow me to be perfectly open with you, and be so good as to ascertain for me if the Princess Alix cares a little for me, and might be persuaded to become my wife ?"

The princess stood still in her amazement. She had, of course, remarked that the young people enjoyed each other's society, and that Prince Ulrich had paid marked attention to her daughter ; but, in view of Alix's youth, who, in the eyes of her young mother, was still a perfect child, she had attached no serious significance to those little civilities, which she deemed the usual result of the friendly intercourse incident to a season together at the same watering-place. That any one should think of wedding her Alix seemed to her a thing impossible.

She gave the prince a searching glance, and smiled.

"Am I then already so old !" was her first involuntary exclamation of astonishment. "Can it be that I really have a marriageable daughter ? No, my prince, do not tell me such a thing !"

And, continuing to smile, she held out to him her small hand, which Ulrich carried to his lips. In her first surprise she was really not in a condition to take in the full import of Ulrich's words ; she had only imbibed unconsciously the feeling that as a mother and

wife she had every reason for congratulating herself. And this feeling of blessedness was dominant while she went on:

"To speak seriously, Alix is still too young. Only consider, the child has just passed her sixteenth birthday. She has as yet seen nothing of the world, positively nothing! I verily believe she packed up her dolls to bring with her. Why, she would hardly understand! Do not bewilder the poor thing, dear prince. Be reasonable, let me beg of you! That my husband and I esteem you greatly you must have been aware, and if it has escaped your notice, let me tell you so now as an answer to your question. Yes, we have a very high regard for you; and this one thing I ask you to do out of regard to us. Do not be impatient! Wait—it need not be long! Only wait until the winter, when we shall go to Berlin, and certainly meet again, and then we can speak of this matter much better than now and here!"

"Until the winter!" exclaimed Ulrich. "That is a long time off. Who knows all that is to happen meanwhile? By that time, may be, Princess Alix will have forgotten me."

"I'll pledge you my word to the contrary!" responded the mother. "Trust that to me!"

"But, at least, you will allow me, from time to time, to give you some token of my existence, and in return to learn how things go with you."

"That we shall concede with pleasure."

"And you will not take it ill if I plague you with my letters and often plead for answers as well?"

"Write as often as you can. We shall not be left in your debt. We can alternate in our replies—my husband and I—and Alix."

"I thank you most cordially," said Ulrich, warmly, again kissing Carola's hand.

"But, on the other hand, you are to promise me that, meanwhile, the matter is to stand just where it is, that you will not give Alix the least hint of it—young girls are terribly knowing!"

"I promise you!"

And he kept his word. His intercourse with Alix was on precisely the same footing as before; he went not one step further—on the contrary, he kept a stricter guard over himself than before, and reined himself in tightly. And, nevertheless, that really dreadfully precocious child was fully aware that something had been settled between Ulrich and her mother, something important, and some-

thing, too, that concerned herself mainly. She was very happy over it ; she did not know herself wherefore.

And suddenly she knew.

When the servants had brought down the hand-bags and placed them in the coupé, when the door had been already locked by the conductor, and the two ladies, with large bouquets in their hands, pressed forward to the window—Ulrich standing on the platform facing them, and looking at them with a peculiar expression upon his face—kept repeating what a pity it was that those delightful days were over and how much they had to thank him for ; and when, finally, at the last minute, Ulrich mounted upon the step and stretching out his hand Alix felt the long, peculiar pressure which she unconsciously returned ; and when their clasped hands fell apart only at the instant that the coach with a jerk shoved off, and Ulrich had to spring away—then she knew—she knew exactly.

She nodded, and then drew back her head. She looked around in the coupé in utter astonishment. Her expression was one of amazement and bewilderment, and her looks questioned her parents as to what it all meant. And ere they had found an answer for her she began suddenly to weep violently. She wept and sobbed, and was not to be comforted.

Her parents let this pass unnoticed.

"Why should we torment the child so?" whispered the prince to Carola. "Ulrich is as a son to us, and I know of no one whom I could like better."

Carola nodded her head in assent, and turned to her daughter. She clasped her hand, and said, tenderly :

"Weep no more, Alix, the prince will often write to us. We are going to reply, and you may send him a greeting at the same time, now and then."

"Really?" sobbed Alix, laughing and weeping at the same time. It was like a revelation to her. "Good papa!" cried she, looking over at her father, and then embracing her mother, "Angel of a mamma!"

"When shall we see each other again?" asked she, after a long pause.

"Very soon! Next winter, at Berlin."

"Not till then!" exclaimed she, in a disappointed tone. "Why not until winter? You ought to invite him to our house. Why

must people be separated when they would so gladly be together? There is no sense in that at all!"

To this she stuck, having no appreciation whatever of the wise explanations of her parents.

When the train stopped at Cologne, magnificent bouquets were handed to the ladies, which Ulrich had ordered for them by telegram, together with a perfectly superfluous dispatch to the prince, the sole aim of which was to be sought in its concluding words:

"Present my most profound respects to the ladies, together with my warmest thanks for those delightful, never-to-be-forgotten hours.

ULRICH."

Between Menthin and Paris, whither Ulrich was transferred the first of September, immediately after their parting, a brisk correspondence ensued. Ulrich's first letter, in which he desired "to be most particularly remembered to my very young and lovely friend Princess Alix," was answered by her mother; but Alix wrote underneath: "I have been so much gratified by your message that I have begged mamma to let me thank you for it myself. Do not entirely forget us in gay Paris. It is very quiet here.—ALIX."

Ulrich's very next letter inclosed an open envelope for Alix, in which he told her how proud he had been of her writing to him with her own hand, and now Alix laid a separate note inside her parents' answer.

It was not long before Ulrich wrote directly to Alix. It was such a natural thing for him to do, bringing him under the pleasing illusion of again carrying on with her those social chats on the beach, and he implored her parents to consider the letter as if addressed to themselves. Thereupon Alix answered him at length, told him a thousand interesting things, concluding with these true-hearted words: "Excuse me if I have sometimes expressed myself a little awkwardly. For, since mamma criticizes my style, I feel somewhat embarrassed. I can not write when anybody is looking over my shoulder."

"Your letter is perfectly charming!" Ulrich wrote back. "But I understand very well how you should feel a little cramped in your movements. It is the same case with me precisely. And, inasmuch as we have nothing worse to say to each other in writing than we did in conversation at Scheveningen, and they did not deem it incumbent upon them to watch us, I think that we are fully justified

in demanding the continuation of a privilege already accorded us, and so—to continue our business style—I shall not fail to make most humble representations to them to that effect.”

Now they both wrote daily. They never lacked for something to say. They were left entirely free from espionage, but not a word escaped them that everybody might not have read. And yet the unwritten tone pervading this free-and-easy dialogue was that of unmistakable tenderness. They had agreed upon everything: To meet again at Berlin in the winter, still maintaining that burdensome restraint which was deemed indispensable by her parents, but in the spring—

“I do not know what peculiar significance is attached by my parents precisely to a seventeenth birthday.” Thus Alix expressed herself. “But they insist upon it that, until I have attained to my seventeenth birthday (therefore, not until May of next year) I am to be a child. Until then I am not to think about any grave matter, and for heaven’s sake not to take any thought or form a wish that may affect my future. Mamma will not hear to it that I shall certainly learn nothing new in this half-year, and that for certain things no learning is needed. One knows these things just as well now as one will know them in six months—no, ~~six years~~. But mamma is inexorable. I must wait until I shall have grown wise next May. But, if everything is as I believe it is, then, early on the morning of my birthday, then I am to surprise mamma by showing her how dreadfully wise I have grown—all in a night.”

And now winter had come at last.

Prince Engelbert had been in Berlin ever since November, inasmuch as important measures were being deliberated upon in the House of Lords. He had found a suitable establishment for himself and family in Vossstrasse. Princess Carola and Alix arrived early in December, to remain there until the end of the carnival.

Ulrich had only been able to obtain a short Christmas leave of absence. He was expected on the morning of December 21st. A ball was to take place at Baron von Heddersdorf’s the same evening, and Alix had made up her mind to make her first appearance at this ball. Her parents had smilingly gratified their daughter, and had postponed their preliminary visits so late that the invitation to Heddersdorf was the first one that they had received.

On the day agreed upon, and at the time set, Ulrich reached Berlin, and took up his quarters at the “Hotel Royal.” Here he

found an invitation to the ball, which, at the instance of Alix, her father had had sent to him.

He made a hasty toilet, and then went out. After he had left his card at Baron von Heddersdorf's, on Behrenstrasse, he repaired to Prince von Eyckoff's, where he was expected at breakfast. Their meeting was thoroughly cordial. Alix was much embarrassed, and a glowing blush suffused her cheeks; but she bore herself bravely, for she had promised this to her mother, and Princess Carola had declared that her deportment would, in a certain degree, settle their opinion as to her maturity. Soon they were all on the old sociable footing; the two young people spoke rapturously of Scheveningen, and congratulated themselves that their frequent interchange of letters had kept up their friendship so pleasantly that they really felt more drawn to each other than ever, and meant that it should be so always—

"Until I am seventeen years old and a really grown-up young lady!" added Alix, with a comical sigh.

"We are calculating upon your dining with us at half-past seven," said Princess Carola to Ulrich, when he arose to take leave.

"You will come, of course?" added Alix. "During the few days we shall be together we shall at least see a great deal of each other.—Must we not, papa?"

Ulrich accepted the invitation gratefully.

From Vossstrasse he repaired to the Office for Foreign Affairs, to pay his respects to his superiors and colleagues, and there he heard of many cases of sickness that rendered appeal to youthful strength necessary, and made it seem desirable for him to obtain a permit to be transferred from his post at Paris to one in this office for the present, and perhaps for some months to come. He immediately placed himself at their disposal, and begged very urgently that he might have the preference, since the state of his private affairs rendered it both important and agreeable that he should find employment here.

The affair was settled on the spot by the head of the department, and the Parisian ambassador notified by telegram that Prince Ulrich von Engernheim would not return to Paris for the present.

In the best mood, on account of this happy turn in his affairs, Ulrich left the office after a few hours. It was snowing hard when he again stepped out upon the street; he drew up his fur collar and prepared to go on foot the short distance to his hotel.

He paused as he was passing by the palace of Count Von Ise-neck.

He knew that he should meet the Countess Juliane that evening at the ball, and that she would feel hurt, with justice, if he had not at least made the effort to bid her good-day. The excuse that he had only been a few hours in Berlin she would hardly deem a valid one. Only a few moments were required for the discharge of a social obligation. He turned into the front yard. It was due Countess Juliane to pay her this visit.

CHAPTER V.

CLOUDS GATHER.

JULIANE was still sitting at the broad window of her large room, which upon this snowy afternoon of a short December day was already dark. She had been sitting there for an hour, perhaps longer, in deep reflection and regretful sorrow, gazing out upon the dazzling white park, the fast falling snow, and the saddest thoughts about her embittered youth, her ruined life, intertwined themselves with the bright, joyous flakes that were merrily whirling and dancing before her eyes.

She had sighed so heavily that she frightened herself. At this moment her maid Bertha, who had been in her service for a long time, entered the room, bringing two cards which she had just received from Johann, the butler, who never entered the countess's chamber.

This interruption of her melancholy reflections was very unpleasant to the countess. She made an impatient gesture and glanced at the cards with an expression that was by no means gracious. When she read the name an evident change came over her. She turned very pale and smiled pleasantly.

"Is the prince himself here?"

"Yes, countess; what is your pleasure?"

"Tell him I am at home."

Bertha bowed, withdrew, and opened the door. Ulrich entered.

When Bertha had closed the door behind the prince her face

contracted into an ugly, cunning smile, and she beckoned to Johann Hotte, who was standing not far off. Bertha had been engaged to be married to Johann for some time; they were to be married at Easter; her master and mistress had already been looking around for some one to take her place.

"Watch out to-day," she whispered to him. "I shall probably have something to tell you after a while. I don't know yet, but it is possible! Would you in any event be able to send Wildicke word this evening?"

"Yes! He told me he could be found every evening from the 18th to the 23d of December, between ten and eleven, at Gottnowstrasse."

"Then, be in readiness. Perhaps it can be done to-day."

"Very well!"

Juliane had quickly arisen, and hastened to meet her visitor in the most cordial manner. She was somewhat disappointed, when Prince Ulrich bowed with the most perfect politeness and most cordially, but that was all, and kissed her hand.

"What a surprise!" exclaimed Juliane. "I can scarcely believe my eyes! How long have you been here?"

"Since early this morning."

"And you came straight to me 'through storm and rain,' as the beautiful poem reads? That was very kind in you! And how long will you remain?"

"My leave of absence is only for a few days; but it is possible that I shall be detained here longer—"

"That would be delightful!" interrupted the countess.

"Upon serious and engrossing business," added Ulrich, with comical gravity.

"That will admit, however, of intermissions for recuperation."

"Fewer than you might imagine. Ah, countess, you have before you now an entirely changed man—an industrious, faithful, and serious worker—"

"For the sake of all the saints, don't terrify me so!" exclaimed Juliane. "Faithfulness and seriousness—I hear and see nothing else—it would be frightful if you were to join in this litany! Remain just as you used to be!"

"Your good advice has, alas, come too late. The mischief is already done."

"Alas, I am afraid that you are not jesting! I had already sus-

pected some such thing, but I didn't want to believe it. I detected it in your letters. You know, moreover, I am very angry with you!"

"I am all the more sorry, as I have undoubtedly merited your displeasure."

"Yes, indeed, you have. You have neglected me in a most unpardonable manner. Your first letters—yes, they were sweet, as they ought to have been. All at once an inexplicable pause that lasted longer and longer, which really made me uneasy—and then, weeks afterward, a wretched, formal, empty, carefully worded excuse, which, in truth, was nothing more than a self-accusation. And in reply to my urgent request for an explanation, again, after another long pause, unmeaning polite phrases, with the same insufferable smile that you now have, and which I never noticed upon your face before."

"I must acknowledge my guilt without any mitigating circumstances whatever."

"You know only too well, you disgraceful criminal, that you can reckon upon the most unbounded clemency from your judge."

She had lowered her voice, and looked at him sadly and tenderly. It had grown quite dark. Ulrich avoided her glance, and, while striving to give his voice as joyous a tone as possible, replied :

"You are entirely too kind! You make me really very much ashamed. I do not deserve your clemency at all. I repeat to you, I am guilty, and you are right to condemn me. I supposed that you would reproach me on account of the flatness and dullness of my letters, and I had firmly resolved to do nothing to palliate my offense, or mitigate your sentence of condemnation. The mildness of your view of the case really embarrasses me."

"Indeed?" drawled the countess.

"Yes, I am embarrassed, seriously embarrassed. I am already so deeply in your debt that I can not hope to rid myself of the burden that your kindness has placed upon me. It is an oppressive sensation to have to declare one's self insolvent. But I can not suffer you to make my account of indebtedness still larger by your undeserved clemency. I can not act in so disingenuous a manner any longer, for, I have already told you that I have become tolerably sensible."

"I am afraid I understand you."

"And I hope that you do! Then you will visit upon me the

punishment I deserve, and not a punishment which, in being pronounced by the mouth of a noble and beautiful woman, easily changes into an affectionate reward. No, a serious punishment! Perhaps, even the worst—indifference."

Juliane looked at him with flashing eyes, and the corners of her mouth twitched nervously. Ulrich arose.

"I shall have to take time to consider," she gently gasped, nervously patting the carpet with her small foot. "First," she continued, with greater self-control, as she arose, "I shall punish you in a less cruel, but, for you, in so much the more unpleasant manner—I shall expect you to dinner at half-past six o'clock. The rest will arrange itself."

"There it is," exclaimed Ulrich, with as little embarrassment as possible. "This is just one of those chastisements that women, with their overkind hearts, conceive of, which do not inflict pain, but flatter, and which I have already in general terms deprecated. But I deeply regret in this particular instance that it will be impossible for me to comply with your wishes. I have already accepted an invitation for to-day."

"Indeed?" repeated Juliane, with the same drawl and the same expression as before. "You have already accepted an invitation?"

"But," added the prince, as he slowly approached the door, "the pleasure of seeing you again this evening will in some measure compensate for the disappointment."

"How so?" asked Juliane, with genuine surprise.

"You are going to the Heddersdorfs?"

"Ah, yes! of course I am going. How did you know? Did you receive an invitation?"

"Prince Eyckhof was kind enough to secure me one. So, *au revoir*, countess until this evening!"

She had absent-mindedly let him have her hand to kiss before going, and remained standing with her back against the piano and her eyes fixed upon the door, which was scarcely visible in the dark. She felt a strangely cold and benumbing sensation. She could not yet determine what to make of all this—of all this that she had so plainly seen, only too painfully felt, and of what was going on within her in such indescribable confusion.

"Shall I bring in the lamps?" inquired Bertha, who had softly entered the room through the canvas door of the dressing-room.

"No!" replied the countess, with unusual harshness.

Bertha once more bowed her head humbly, and disappeared. She smiled again.

What a meeting this had been !

Juliane was enraged. In hasty steps she traversed the room.

He was at least frank and courageous. He had not cringed ; he had come in search of her. He had not dissembled ; he had told her with offensive plainness. Disgraceful ! Another woman ! But who ? who ? He had already accepted an invitation, and he was going to the Heddersdorfs' this evening, and Uncle Engelbert had secured him an invitation !

Could it be possible ! This explained, doubtless, the strange importunity with which Aunt Carola had overwhelmed her in urging her to accompany Alix and take her under her charge. There was no doubt, it was Alix !

Now, for the first time, certain hints that Alix, in her simplicity, had given became clear to her. The idea of her not having sooner understood their meaning, of her having mistaken the deep excitement of her cousin for childish ball fever ! Now, for the first time, she understood it all ! Youth can not dissemble.

And when she recalled how flatteringly Alix had caressed her, how deeply she had blushed when she whispered in her ear : " You must not forsake me to-day, Liane. I need you. There are some things we would rather tell a friend than our mothers. Please, Liane, come with us ! " when she recalled the agitated sound of the young girl's voice, then she could no longer doubt. And she was to be the go-between—she !—between her and him !

She determined to tell him what she thought of such a thing being expected of her ! She would tell him to-night, too ! The blood rushed to her head, and her pulses beat violently. She rushed into her dressing-room, opened the iron safe, took out a leather *étui*, with silver corners, of about the size of a cabinet portfolio, came back into the room, and rang the bell.

" Bring a lamp," she said to Bertha.

Bertha and a maid returned at once with the lamps, which had been lighted for some time and standing on the hall table.

" Trim my pearl-gray dress with this lace," said Juliane to Bertha, pointing to the leather *étui*.

" So your ladyship does not wish the light-blue dress that I have already prepared ? "

" No ; I have changed my mind."

"As you command, countess. Would your ladyship tell me at what hour to expect you in the dressing-room—about arranging the lace?"

"Come at eight, and order the carriage for half-past nine."

"As your ladyship commands."

"And one thing more," said Juliane, after calling her back. "For some time you have been having those attacks. Last night you talked in your sleep in the most weird manner—groaned horribly—and now and then cried out, so that I was frightened almost to death. For hours I did not close my eyes."

"I am extremely sorry. If your ladyship had only aroused me!"

"That only makes it worse! But, after so bad a night, I feel somewhat exhausted, and would, at least, after the ball, like to spend a quiet night. So you can sleep in your own room to-night. I feel perfectly protected with Nero. Let the dog into my room toward midnight."

"At your command, countess."

Bertha bowed with that humility peculiar to her; but when she had turned and left the room her face exhibited that malicious, cunning smile with which she had already received several of her mistress's commands to-day.

As the servants in the side buildings toward the street were separated some distance from the master and mistress of the house, the arrangement was made that, during the now quite frequent and often prolonged absence of the count, Bertha should pass the night in the dressing-room that immediately adjoined Juliane's sitting-room and chamber, where she would always be at the countess's beck and call. The count had himself arranged matters in this manner, for Juliane was anything but timid. She would not even allow the massive *rouleaux* to be let down and the large iron cross-bars to be placed across the door leading into the park. She felt as if she were imprisoned, she would say. Besides, even in winter, she would, before retiring, open the window, and, upon pretty nights, it was almost a necessity to her to promenade in the park a quarter of an hour before retiring. So it would have been disagreeable and vexatious to her to recall the servants in order to have the door barred up again. And she felt far better protected and guarded by her Nero than by iron windows and bars—better than by a human watchman.

It was a splendid animal—pearl-gray, with a whitish shield on

his broad breast, and a white point to his tail, with light-green eyes—a powerful, short-haired Ulmer dog, strong as a lion, with flashing teeth, that could crush an ox-bone like a splinter.

The animal had been methodically educated against nocturnal trespassers, and was kept in practice by the butler Johann Hotte, who was its keeper. At the mere word of command, "Catch!" Nero would rush upon the large wooden figure upon which he practiced, seize it by the throat, throw it to the ground, bury his teeth in it, and tear it, till the command "Loose!" ended the examination. During the day Nero was shut up in a special part of the park, inclosed by a strong, high fence. Toward evening Hotte would let him out, the countess would open the park-door of her rooms, whistle, and the handsome, strong, and dangerous animal would come in long leaps, and lay himself at her feet, wagging his tail, uttering short cries of delight, and striking the asphalt pavement of the veranda with his tail, like the handle of a broom. With the exception of Johann Hotte, who fed and attended the dog, and Bertha, whom he allowed peaceably to pursue her way in the spirit of fellowship as his mistress's maid, all the other occupants of the house evinced a very justifiable awe of Nero. He was, in fact, perfectly familiar with the people of the house, but he had a most decided aversion to any undue familiarity, and he would snarl at every one who attempted to take any liberties with him. Nero was a character, and possessed the disposition of a vassal. He made a most decided distinction between the manner of his intercourse with Johann and with the countess. Although Johann was the only one who cared for his material welfare, he knew perfectly well that he was not his master. His manner toward the servant was not entirely free from *hauteur*. He allowed himself to be fed, washed, exercised, and trained by him—of course, that had to be. But he did not make any more concessions toward him; and when Johann would good-naturedly pat him he would silently turn away. Even Johann would scarcely have dared to strike the dog, although for four years, ever since Prince Eyckof had brought him to the house for the protection of his niece, he had had the care of him. Nero was at that time scarcely a year old, the son of the noble Preia, the true friend of Juliane and the terror of Menthin.

Nero's behavior toward the count was also a peculiarly reserved one. He respected him as the husband of his mistress, but he always kept at a distance from him; and this was most agreeable

to the count, who always had an uncomfortable sensation when Nero was near. Toward his mistress he was tender to an extreme. As soon as the door of her room was opened and he scented her, he would raise an ominous growl, and would leap about with his chain as though he were mad with joy; and as soon as she would in her clear voice command him to be quiet, he would be silent, raise his beautiful head, and turn his flashing eyes longingly in the direction, from which she must come, while he constantly struck the ground with his tail. When the door of his inclosure was opened, and he was allowed to go to her, no power on earth could have held him back. He would circle around the little countess in wild springs and with loud, joyous barking, rub his head carefully against her, and roll and tumble along in front of her. When she patted his head, he seemed to be almost beside himself with joy. His whole and only ambition was to please his mistress. She ruled this powerful animal with her little finger, with a mere glance, and when, in the vehement manifestation of his stormy devotion, he was guilty of some awkwardness, had run over or overturned something with his tail, the weakly little Juliane would seize him by the ears, slap him with her delicate hand or whip him with her parasol or whatever else she happened to have in her hand; and Nero, who would not have shrunk back from a contest with a bull, and could have thrown at one leap the strongest man to the ground and overpowered him—this powerful and gigantic dog would tuck his tail between his legs, cower humbly at the feet of the angry but impotent woman, and whiningly obey her commands as though the blows he had not felt at all had hurt him severely.

Of course, Juliane loved this splendid, strong, sensible, and faithful animal very dearly, and treated him most kindly. And she had a perfect right to tell Bertha that she did not need any other protection.

She permitted Bertha to sleep in the adjoining room only during the absence of her husband because he himself desired it. That which Juliane had called one of her maid's attacks was really often very disagreeable and annoying. Bertha would groan and cry aloud in her sleep in a manner that would cause Juliane to spring up in bed terrified. For this reason she would often send Bertha to the front part of the house, after she had assisted her in undressing, and remain herself in the parterre alone with Nero. She had never felt the first sensation of fear. The dog lay in the next room

in front of the iron safe, and even in the deepest sleep would hear his mistress call, and, in the twinkling of an eye, would be at her bedside ready to obey her commands. He would stand, with ears erect, motionless until she sent him back to his resting-place.

"Johann!" called Bertha across the hall; "the barouche for the countess at half-past nine!"

She beckoned to him, and advanced cautiously to meet him half-way.

"It is all arranged!" she whispered to him, after she had satisfied herself that none of the other servants were near. "I am going to sleep in the front part of the house, she will remain alone! Send word to Wildicke. He must be ready about midnight. She has given orders that the dog be let into her room at midnight."

"And she starts at half-past nine?"

"Yes, between half-past nine and quarter to ten."

"Then Bob, the page, can take the box. She will not notice who opens and closes the carriage-door. I will fool the coachman in some way or other. But if I intend going to Gottnowstrasse, I have no time to lose."

"Arrange it to suit yourself. But it must be done to-night—yes, to-night! We have been waiting for six months already. Who knows when we shall have such an opportunity again? So, to-night absolutely! I must go to the sewing-room now, and shall probably see you again. You'll attend to everything?"

"Depend upon me!"

She hastened away, feverishly red and with an ugly smile upon her face. She was in a state of excitement the whole time she was engaged in arranging the "Lamoral" lace upon its pearl-gray satin background.

Johann took his seat upon the carved settee near the main entrance in the front hall, and folded his arms. He was evidently striving to compose his broad face, with its thick, clean-shaven lips, into its accustomed lack of expression, but he, too, was unusually excited. He projected his lower above his upper lip, and his nostrils dilated. And he, whose motionless, erect bearing was held up to the retainers of other aristocratic families as a model, was vibrating restlessly hither and thither in his seat, and keeping time upon his left arm with the fingers of his right. "Wildicke may say what he pleases—it is no small undertaking!" And now that he was face to face with the decisive moment, his heart began to beat violently,

although he thought that by his familiarity with the scheme for long months, and by the wearisome preparations for it, he had become sufficiently trained.

At half-past nine the carriage rolled up before the door. Bob, the page, received orders from Johann to accompany the countess. Johann had often before got Bob to take his place, but never without the countess's permission.

"To-morrow the old gentleman returns!" he whispered, good-naturedly to Drenkman, the coachman. "So I am going to-night to buy Bertha a little present. Shall I bring you anything from the Christmas market?"

"Ginger-cakes," said Drenkman.

"Very well. I'll send Bob along with you."

At a quarter before ten o'clock Juliane entered the carriage. In her magnificent lace dress, with a splendid diadem of pearls in her thick black hair and a pearl necklace around her lovely plump neck, she looked enchanting. A strange flush glowed through the dull, sallow tint of her cheeks. She drove to the Heddersdorfs'. She, in fact, did not observe that Bob opened the carriage-door, assisted her into the carriage, closed the door, and clambered upon the box, and that it was he, too, who assisted her in getting out before the door of the Heddersdorf mansion.

"The carriages are ordered for two o'clock," reported Bob, dutifully.

"Be here at quarter before twelve!" ordered the countess.

As soon as the carriage had rolled away, Johann, who had laid aside his livery in all haste and donned his walking-suit and a light gray overcoat, with his low-crowned Derby hat, stepped out of his room that faced upon the Wilhelmstrasse, ascended the short steps, and advanced toward the front hall.

"Are you going out?" asked the porter, who appeared in the door of his cellar room.

"To-night is the last night I shall have free. The old gentleman returns early to-morrow morning. One always has a great many things to look after at Christmas. You keep your tongue silent! I will bring something back for your little children, too. I must be in a hurry. At eleven o'clock all the shops will be closed. Adieu."

"Adieu." The porter drew the cord and Johann passed out.

In Behrenstrasse he met his master's carriage, which, on account

of the slippery, snow-covered streets, was returning slowly to the Iseneck palace. Drenkman recognized him, and called out :

"Don't forget my ginger cakes!"

"I'll attend to that!" replied Johann, going rapidly on.

At the "Passage" he engaged a first-class cab by the hour.

"Drive me to Neue-Königstrasse, corner of Linienstrasse! I will give you a handsome *pour-boire*, but off now, and drive like a madman!"

The cabman felt flattered by the familiar tone of the stranger, and drove as fast as he could upon the bad streets and with his miserable horse.

The cab reached its destination shortly before half-past ten o'clock. Hotte got out in great haste.

"Wait here a moment," he said to the cabman. He turned to the right, down Gottnowstrasse.

CHAPTER VI.

FRIENDSHIP AMONG THIEVES.

FREDERICK WILDICKE, whom Johann Hotte was now in search of, was an individual well known to all police officers, and commanded the greatest respect among the criminal characters in Berlin under the name "Humpelfritz." His expressive head, with its curly black hair and his neat black mustache, was arranged in the criminal gallery under the division of "dangerous burglars."

Wildicke and Hotte had been apprenticed to the same master-locksmith. Wildicke, however, had been a journeyman for three years, and was a clever and unusually skillful workman, while Hotte, who was far less adapted to mechanical work, had just finished his apprenticeship when the war broke out. At that time Wildicke was twenty-three years old, Hotte twenty-one. Both were assigned to the heavy artillery, and there arose between them during the campaign a pleasant relation of fellowship. But Wildicke was a bad soldier, extraordinarily careless in the performance of his duties, and sometimes even insubordinate. He was several times severely punished. Hotte, on the other hand, behaved himself in an exemplary manner, and was decorated with the Iron Cross on

account of his general bravery, but especially because of his courageous behavior in the month of December, 1870.

After the war, when they had been released from the service, the two lost sight of each other. They both turned their backs upon the trade they had learned. Hotte secured a place as domestic. His excellent military papers and his decoration obtained for him immediately a situation in a good family. He held himself erect, had an excellent form, and possessed that broad face, flat nose, and thick lips, that seemed to render their owner especially qualified for a position in an aristocratic family. He proved himself apt and faithful in the performance of his duties. He had good papers, and was promoted repeatedly to better positions. For three years he had been in the highest attainable position; he was chamberlain of his Excellency Count von Iseneck, and therefore the chief servant in one of the first families of the city. But he spent money too freely. He had not yet laid by a cent; on the contrary, he had debts that weighed upon him—now, more than ever before, as he desired to marry Bertha Schmider at Easter. Bertha, it is true, had saved something, but by no means enough to secure for them the independent position they desired.

Wildicke, who had been his comrade while they were learning their trade and during the war, had not fared so well. He had returned from France debauched and degraded, unwilling to do any kind of work, and had identified himself with the worst class of associates. In the year 1872 he had been caught while engaged in an atrocious burglary in the Behrenstrasse. As it was his first offense of the kind, he got off comparatively easy. Immediately after his acquittal he was guilty of a series of burglaries, extending over the period of the winter of 1873 to 1874. Many of these were of the most daring character, throwing the entire western quarter of the city, between the Brandenburg and the Potsdam gates, into a state of great excitement. Of the whole ten or twelve burglaries, of which he had certainly been guilty, one only could be fastened upon him—the one, viz., in which he had been caught in the act. This one had been carried out in a manner so bold, and his participation in others of a similar character was in so high a degree probable, that Wildicke, who was well known to be a most dangerous criminal, was sentenced to a long confinement in the penitentiary.

After a year's confinement he escaped from Moabit, at the risk of his life and under circumstances of temerity such as the most

experienced officers had never before seen. In leaping down from the prison-walls, which he had scaled in a manner that could find no explanation, he broke his left leg. In horrible pain he dragged himself along until he reached a barrel-house in the Kesselstrasse, where he was known and received. Under an assumed name, and with forged papers, which a friend secured for him, he had the incredible audacity to apply for admission to the Royal Hospital ; so that while one class of authorities were in search of the escaped felon, another class were caring for him in one of the public institutions. The fracture of his leg was so serious a one that it healed very slowly, and never completely ; the broken leg became a few inches shorter than the other leg, and, by reason of this fact he limped very perceptibly. But this did not prevent him from carrying on his nefarious practices. His first performance after his discharge from the Royal Hospital was of the most romantic nature.

Before entering upon his term in the penitentiary, Wildicke had lived with a fresh, pretty young woman named Rose Moockel, who had been a barmaid, and had become perfectly infatuated with him. In company with him, she had confronted the jury under the grave charge of receiving stolen goods, but through the successful efforts of Wildicke, who had defended her better than the most experienced advocate could have done, she had been acquitted. His longing after Rose had been a powerful motive for his breaking out of Moabit.

On the very day, accordingly, that he was dismissed from the hospital, he commenced a search for her. After a great deal of trouble, he ascertained that Rose Moockel was in the workhouse at Rummelsburg, serving out a term of imprisonment ; he learned this from a young girl who herself had just left Rummelsburg a few days before.

He got this girl to describe the locality to him with great exactness—the pavilion Rose occupied, the position of the sleeping-apartments and of her bed, and, when he had learned all that he desired, he executed what seemed almost impossible. Armed with false keys, pick-locks, and crow-bars, the noiseless use of which he understood almost perfectly, this escaped convict, after whom the authorities were searching diligently, and who had just recovered the use of his leg, upon a dark night broke into the workhouse, opened four locks, and, after an hour's wandering around, stood by the bed of Rose Moockel, in a room where twenty other girls were sleeping,

besides two attendants. He awoke the unsuspecting girl with a kiss, and whispered to her: "It is I! Fritz! Put on your clothes quickly and noiselessly. I will wait in the passage. All the doors are open."

Ten minutes later the two were in the Rummelsburg highway. There a cab was awaiting them to convey them to Berlin.

Although he had undoubtedly been guilty of numerous burglaries since he had gained his freedom, yet in no individual case could the guilt be legally fastened upon him. He was "whistled" off by a watchman on one occasion, and was once arrested in a barrel-house that was frequented by thieves only. He was carried back to Moabit, and received a slight additional punishment on account of his offenses.

Since the month of May, 1879, he had again secured his freedom, but was under strict watch of the police. But in spite of this he had again committed various burglaries, all of which bore the undoubted stamp of his work. But it was impossible to catch him in the act. No trace of property stolen could ever be found.

Every criminal, as is well known, has his speciality. The cellar-thief never breaks into the garret, the store-thief never commits burglary, the burglar has a contempt for simple theft. And among the numerous groups, all of which have their peculiarities, there are many characteristics distinguishable from one another, and which never become confounded.

Wildicke's peculiarity was this: He would steal nothing but gold and gold-values, jewels, and the like, and always by breaking into safes that were considered burglar-proof. In fact, he observed strict geographical limits in the exercise of his burglarious practices. He confined himself to the western portion of Berlin. His field of activity commenced in the Behrenstrasse, Leipzigerstrasse, Unter den Linden, west from the Friedrichstrasse, and extended thence across the Thiergarten into the streets that led from it.

In the execution of his burglaries he always made use of the same methods. He would search out the resorts that were frequented by the servants of aristocratic families, and there make their acquaintance—a thing that was not accompanied with much difficulty, on account of his prepossessing exterior, his great cleverness and affability, and his extraordinary generosity. Thus they gradually became his colaborers, consciously or unconsciously.

As soon as the necessary preliminaries had been accomplished

he would "make a start," either independently upon his own responsibility and at his own risk, or with the help and assistance of some one whom he had led astray. He either did the work himself or caused it to be done by others under his supervision, would "stand sentinel" during the execution of the crime, receive the stolen articles, and filch them off and sell them to some dealer in stolen goods. He had far-reaching business associations with these people. In this respect he showed incomparable skillfulness, and for this reason they were so rarely successful in finding a trace of articles stolen or secreted by them.

It was in one of these resorts in the Mauerstrasse that Wildicke and Hotte met each other one evening. Their meeting was most cordial.

Johann had no idea what his former comrade had been doing, or what trade he had taken up since he had last seen him. They exchanged, over a glass of beer in pleasant conversation, all their experiences, and spoke also of their present situation.

Wildicke found his friend in such a mood that hopes were awakened in him of being able to carry out his plans. Johann was in love and in debt. His ambition was to marry Bertha Schmider, to purchase a beer-house, or establish a new one, and thus, as an independent man, provide a quiet livelihood for himself and family.

During this first conversation, Wildicke confined himself to the rôle of a sympathetic listener. Parenthetically, he let fall some remarks that he had learned at union meetings, concerning "the inequitable distribution of wealth," "the great disinherited masses," and similar subjects.

This first meeting was in the next few days followed by others. Each time the same theme formed the subject of conversation, and quite imperceptibly Wildicke began to make more definite statements as to how a determined and unprejudiced man might contribute most important aid toward the abolition of the crying wrongs and inequalities of fate, and do much toward the great work of a general equalization.

"We need expect nothing from the rich; they will hold fast to that which they have! Consequently, the poor must take the matter in hand. When many attempt such a thing, they call it honorable warfare; when only one, they call it a crime. But one should not allow one's self to be deceived by mere foolish words. We have exactly the same right to the pleasures of life, and it is no fault of ours

that we were born into the world poor devils. Whoever contents himself with this deserves no better fate! I am not contented with such an arrangement, and I know full well what I am going to do!"

"What do you mean exactly?" asked Johann, whom Wildicke's general allegations had interested, and who desired to hear something more definite and more comprehensible about the matter.

"With you nothing can be done! You are a sleepy-headed fellow!" replied Fritz, in a tone of evasion.

"Oho!" exclaimed Johann, who prided himself on his sharpness.

"Yes, exactly!" emphasized Wildicke; "you are all sleepy-heads; you sleep merely to get rid of your hunger, and suffer it without a murmur, in order that those who are awake may eat their fill! I'll lend you one of Johann Most's books. Read it; you will find the whole matter clearly discussed there! This man knows exactly where our shoes pinch us, he has a sympathetic heart for us!"

Hotte reflected upon all that his friend (who was intellectually greatly his superior) had told him and all that he had read in the little pamphlets he had lent him. He discussed the matter also with his betrothed, and Bertha evinced the most ardent interest in the subject, and expressed the desire of making the acquaintance of this interesting man.

The acquaintance was made in the latter part of June, in a summer garden at Old-Moabite, frequented by innocent country-folk, servant girls, and uhlans from the neighboring barracks. There were present Johann and his betrothed, Bertha Schmider, and Fritz Wildicke with the less seriously disposed Rose Moockel.

Wildicke possessed something that was extremely attractive to young women of the style of Bertha and Rose. They liked his dark, curly hair, his little black mustache, and his piercing black eyes; and the daring determination in his features, which shrunk from no difficulties, possessed a charm for them. He was sharp-witted and conversed with great cleverness. He was generous, and in his manner gallant toward women. He took care that they got good seats, that they were promptly waited upon; he let them throw dice at the booths, ride in the merry-go-round, and bought them little bouquets from the flower-girls. He had already won Bertha's favor, before the real object of their meeting had even been touched upon. Bertha was also pleased with Rose. Rose was a fresh, wanton young girl, who

dressed well, and in Wildicke's presence—of whom she was mortally afraid—behaved quietly and most modestly.

The four sat in a rather quiet part of the crowded garden where the illumination was anything but brilliant. The spectators were crowded shoulder to shoulder before the stage of the summer theatre, where the performances of the comic singers, the poor female dancers, and acrobats alternated with wretched exhibitions of stupid farces. There were also to be heard the cries of little children, whom their parents were compelled to carry along with them upon their Sunday excursions. From the elongated one-story building opposite the stage came forth dancing-music, the most audible part of which was the sound of the bass-horn and of the trombone, but occasionally also, when the door that opened into the garden was ajar, one could hear one or more harmonious measures. To all these noises were to be added the rolling of the nine-pin balls and the clatter of the falling pins, the cries of the alley-boys reporting the scores, and, drowning all other sounds, the harsh notes of a hand-organ provided for the amusement of the patrons of the merry-go-round.

The frequenters of the garden, however, did not appear to be annoyed. They were enjoying the summer theatre, dancing in the ball-room and riding upon the wooden horses, without being at all inconvenienced in their amusements by the noise of their neighbors.

The four had already eaten their supper and partaken copiously of the thin light beer when Bertha, who had long since become impatient to hear the explanation of Wildicke's glorious popular theories, finally determined to give the conversation a more serious direction.

For the past few days Wildicke had shown himself very reserved toward Hotte from sinister motives. He had sowed the seed, and wanted to wait for it to spring up. He had not made a mistake. Hotte had shown since that time a much greater desire for his company; he had made several efforts to direct the conversation to that interesting topic, but Wildicke played stupid and avoided any further discussion of the subject. Now he considered the occasion a suitable one for a thorough discussion of the whole matter, and the time ripe for bringing it to a successful issue. He had seen, at the first glance from Bertha's vivacious and curious eyes, that she was a prudent woman.

"These people ought to be happy here!" sighed Bertha. "They

can stay as long as they wish, but we must return to our bondage at eleven, or, at latest, at half-past eleven o'clock."

"Because you wish to have it so!" said Wildicke, taking up the conversation, as he had now found the opportunity for which he had been waiting to change the subject. "If ladies and gentlemen can still find people who are willing to be slaves, they have a perfect right to make them slaves."

"Yes, but one is bound to live!"

"One is bound to live! That is the expression of what I think and feel in the depths of my heart! We want to live, too, Miss Bertha! That is exactly what I am always saying. But is one bound to live like a dog? No! The rich and powerful have arranged it so. What we call the laws of nature know nothing of such an arrangement. We have our rights as well as others. We have for thousands of years been flayed, plundered, impoverished, and cheated. Of course, this is all very agreeable to those who live at our expense. They desire to perpetuate this shameful robbery, and therefore they have intrenched themselves firmly in their position, and that which protects them they call laws. But these very laws are the work of these privileged characters, the wealthy, and we have consequently nothing to do with them! We acknowledge other and higher laws—the laws of nature, don't you see? We declare you have stuffed yourselves long enough at overloaded tables and enjoyed the products of others' labor, now our turn has come! We want to fill our stomachs for once in our lives; we want to play master once, too! We are no simpletons; we are men, and don't care a fig for your legal nonsense. Your laws are nothing but scare-crows to frighten away sparrows! Then, we are criminals, I suppose? Do you dare to talk about criminals, you who are the only true criminals! You rob us of our wages, the product of our labor, our health and happiness! You rob, plunder, and murder under the protection of your laws! And if we protest against it or offer resistance, then you call us criminals. Very well, then, we are, we want to be criminals in the sense of your laws, and we are proud of it."

He made a short pause and glanced around. He was satisfied with the effect of his speech, and continued:

"For example, Miss Bertha! You are walking through the forest and see some blackberries, you pick some and eat them—you have a right to do so! But if some extortioner has built a hedge

around them then you are upon the lands of some private owner, and if you then pluck the berries from the bush the laws, which are made in the interest of extortioners and private land-owners, denominate it "theft." Is this not crack-brained? Does the earth that nourishes the fruit and the sun that brings it to maturity and your stomach that craves it—do they know anything about the hedge? And so it is everywhere and in every case! I say, therefore, we have the right, and it is our duty to wage war against the rich and against their laws with all the means in our power, and to secure advantages for ourselves whenever and wherever we can; and I resist the laws, and declare the blackberries belong to me as much as they do to you, and if I climb over the hedge and pick them they belong to me all the same. And if I can take your money it belongs to me."

The last conclusion, on account of its sudden leap, astounded Bertha somewhat, although Wildicke's eloquence had greatly affected her. Hotte stared blankly into space, Rose smiled and took a swallow of beer. Bertha was not at all indignant, she was merely surprised, and her practical mind presented to her at once one of the consequences of a realization of these theories.

"But suppose one were caught at it?" she prudently inquired.

Fritz smiled contentedly. He had already accomplished his chief object, as this question proved. The aversion to crime itself had been overcome. There was only a little uneasiness concerning the difficulties of successfully carrying out the theories; that must be dispelled.

"One must not allow one's self to be caught—that's just the point!" said Wildicke, deliberately, lowering his voice.

And while the nine-pin balls rumbled, the bass-horn growled, the female singers warbled on the stage, and the hand-organ uttered its doleful sounds, no one amid all the noise paid any attention to the four guests at the little green table in the dark corner. Wildicke was talking in a low tone, discussing weighty matters, and all bent their heads toward the speaker. It was an agreeable sensation to Bertha that she was sitting so near to him.

"That is just the point—one must not be caught!" he repeated more slowly, and in a still lower tone. "And that is our concern; we men must take care of that! We don't ask anything more from you women than that you be on the lookout, and keep your eyes wide open, and say to us, so and so! Then it is our turn, and we

attend to the rest ! For example, we need a few thousand marks. If we have them, we can marry, buy a small business, work hard, the little wife will help, and we shall be free and the happiest people on earth ! ”

Hotte winked at Bertha, and Bertha nudged Wildicke with her knee.

“Go on ! ” said Bertha.

Upon Bertha’s challenging him to go further, Wildicke said :

“You see those few thousand marks go to make us happy and rich for all time, and the rich folks will not be a bit the poorer for a few thousand marks the less. They’ll not miss them. No harm will be done. Do you ask, Where is the money ? and how can one come at it ? When I say money, I do not mean just gold and silver—I mean anything that is salable. If it has money value, that is all I ask. Let that be my business. Where, then, and how ? That is the question ! And here the ladies must lend their aid ! ”

He bowed gallantly to Bertha. “A lady’s maid—isn’t this so—gets everywhere, knows where her lady keeps her jewels, and also knows when she goes out and comes in again, when she has visitors, and when she is off on a journey—and all this confides to a friend who is determined upon action. And this friend knows exactly when the right moment has come, and then the thing is done. And then there is a sharing out. Not a creature is the wiser, nobody can get at us, and we’ll have what we want ! To your very good health, ladies.”

He drank to their health. They emptied their beer mugs, and he ordered them to be refilled.

He wiped off his handsome moustache, snapped his fingers, and looked smilingly at Bertha. This time he touched her with his knee.

“Well ! ” said he, winding up his speech ; “could not such a thing be managed at your house ? ”

“Something might have been done, earlier,” said Bertha, burning up from covetousness. “Oh, if I could only have got acquainted with you earlier, and known all this ! ”

“How is that ? ” asked Wildicke, sympathetically, while he touched her again. “What has been once may happen again ! ”

“That may be ! ” thought Bertha.

“Speak out, then, dear Fräulein.”

“It is very wrong in me—”

"Stuff, nonsense! We are here among friends! Here's to the health of the flower of girls!"

Again they touched glasses, and all drank.

"But your word of honor upon it, that you'll keep dark about the matter," said Bertha, confidentially.

Without the slightest consideration Wildicke gave his word of honor.

"And you, Johann? Not a word passes your lips! Up to this time nobody has learned one thing from me Fräulein Rose"

All swore inviolable secrecy through the shaking of hands.

"Well, then," said Bertha, softly, as they again stuck their heads together. "When the master goes traveling, I have to sleep on a couch in the same room next to hers, where the dog sleeps too, just in front of the iron press where the countess locks up everything, her jewelry and her lace. My countess has superb jewelry!"

"I've got the idea already," said Wildicke, slyly. "You can choose to be very fast asleep, and meanwhile the whole thing can be managed handily. But how about that dog?"

"But I don't think so," continued Bertha. "I have already told you that my countess is out of sorts. And it's very natural, too, isn't it? She, a pretty, spirited young lady about twenty-four years old may be, and he a gruff old bear of sixty, forever growling and working, working all the time—I can not blame her, no, not one bit—! So, 'Bertha,' said she to me one day, 'you snore and make such outcries in your sleep! That makes me nervous. Quiet is what I want. You need not make up your bed in the next room. Just go quietly to sleep in the front of the house in your own room.' I thought no harm of it at first. But when I was sent away a second, and a third time I began to prick up my ears. People can not help having a little curiosity, can they? So, after I had said good-night, instead of going to the front I went up-stairs and made up my mind to wait and watch. I took my station at the hall-window on the ground floor looking out on the park. The dog barked, but only once. Usually he barks like mad if the countess does not quiet him. And then I saw quite distinctly how the door leading to the park was opened and somebody slipped in. Immediately afterward he had vanished underneath the trees. One could see nothing more from above. I said to myself, the next time that I am not to disturb my young countess I'll contrive it more cleverly. I'll take my

stand at the hall window of the first story. And it was not long either before he came again. Nero had barked once more, and I had heard quite plainly, 'Be still, Nero!' And from there I could see the steps leading from the park to the house, and I recognized him too, by the figure and walk, although it was quite dark. I have keen eyes like a lynx. When I tripped down-stairs in my stocking-feet the dog howled. She quieted him directly! That's how the thing is. But who it was, I'll not say!"

"That is no concern of ours," remarked Wildicke, with perfect *nonchalance*. He had seized upon the essential at once. "And so the count is off on a journey, the countess sleeps alone, the servants sleep forward?"

"Half a mile off!"

"She receives a secret visitor, and during that time one is sure of not being disturbed in the adjoining room where the press stands?"

"Quite sure, of course! In the first place, they will not hear you, and, in the second, if they do hear, they can do nothing whatever. They can not call for help, else people will come and find him. Such a thing does not pass among our fine folks," added Bertha, naively.

"Brilliant!" exclaimed Wildicke, enraptured. In a more reflective tone, however, he continued: "But the dog? You were saying something about a dog."

"A bad animal!"

"Is he always so?"

"Always."

"Ah! then we must just give him a little powder."

"No!" cried Bertha, with the greatest positiveness. "I do not mean to treat my countess that way. I'll not suffer that in any event. I'd rather give up the whole business. No harm is to come to the dog. But Hotte knows him!"

"That's good! Hotte must take the matter in hand, then. He is in the house already, while I would find it hard to get in. Well, Hotte, what say you? Are you a man?"

Hotte cast a glance at Bertha. Then he said: "Well, then, I'll do it!"

"Here's to your health!" exclaimed Wildicke.

Again they pledged each other, the men emptying their glasses, and Wildicke ordering fresh pint mugs.

"But when shall it be?" asked Wildicke, furthermore.

"Yes, when? that's just it," continued Bertha. "There has been no change since the beginning of the year. When the master is away I sleep forward, and quietly, too, it would seem, now." Bertha and Wildicke laughed. "He is no longer here, either, but is certainly coming again soon, and then it can be arranged for sure. It may be some time yet. The master and mistress are both going on a journey soon, to stay away two or three months. . . ."

"There'll be plenty of time then."

"My countess takes everything with her. She has a particular trunk for her jewelry. Then the press is empty."

"Well, we must make good use of our time, so as to get everything ready, and 'strike while the iron is hot.' Did you always know beforehand when he was coming?"

"Always the afternoon before. My countess always had the headache then."

"Very fine. In the next few days I'll inspect the premises. I'll lead in the matter, organize everything. Fräulein Bertha says: Now! Hotte works, Rose helps—and now the thing is, nothing must be done in a hurry. We must wait quietly, and, when the time comes, act with determination. Once more, your very good health. To the success of our fine project!"

They emptied their beer mugs. Wildicke, who, in the way of social settlement, as he esteemed it, had recently made quite a large amount of money, treated the whole party.

They rode in the street cars together as far as the Brandenburger Thor, where they parted about half-past twelve. Johann and Bertha repaired to the count's palace, while Wildicke, with his Rose, rode on.

He had made the deepest impression upon Bertha.

A few days afterward, on a Friday, when Countess Juliane regularly received between the hours of four and five o'clock, and never left the small reception parlor in the upper story—this was her last afternoon reception before setting out on her travels, and there was a great deal of company assembled—on that particular Friday there announced himself to the *portier* of the Iseneck palace a sympathetic seeming, plainly dressed man, who was a little lame in the left foot, inquiring whether his cousin Bertha Schmider were still in the countess's service, and if he might not speak to her for a moment? He had only arrived that morning, and was going on to Bremen by the night train.

The *portier* beckoned to one of the younger servants. "Call Bertha. She is likely in her own room or the sewing-room, if not in the countess's park chamber. Somebody would like to speak with her—her cousin."

"Fritz Schmider, from Hague," added Wildicke.

Bertha came at once. Their greeting was that of affectionate cousins. Fritz kissed his cousin, because the *portier* was there; it was very pleasant to him, and not at all disagreeable to her. Chatting about family matters, they passed slowly along the corridor to the left, talking in low tones all the way. There they were quite alone. Bertha cautiously opened the last door on the right side. They were in the countess's dressing-room. There stood the press. Wildicke compassionately shrugged his shoulders. At the first glance he had perceived that the press was of old-fashioned construction—a mere plaything!

"A little, little press!" said he. He caught hold of it, pressed himself against it, and, without any special effort, pushed one end of it away from the wall and shoved it back again. "That can be easily managed. Now I know everything."

Bertha's knees knocked together from agitation. He soothed and encouraged her, and, although this time the *portier* was not present, he kissed her heartily several times, Bertha making no objection. Hotte was busy that day in the upper story.

The countess left Berlin the very next day, Bertha attending her, and being charged particularly with the care of the trunk in which she kept her valuables. A few days later the count repaired to Salzkammergut, in order to spend August at Gastein. He took Bob with him as his valet. He found it good, besides the *portier*, to put an old, trusty servant in charge of the house. Hotte hardly justified the confidence reposed in him. He now met Wildicke and Rose almost daily. Wildicke always had money, and, from time to time, lent Hotte as much as two hundred marks. "We'll settle by and by," he used to think. Under Wildicke's directions, Hotte now worked in the greatest tranquillity and comfort.

Hotte was, indeed, a skillful locksmith. In the afternoon hours, when he was secure against any interruption from the other servants left behind, he would go into the dressing-room, bolt himself in, push the press away from the wall, and from behind artistically bore into it with an augur. He prepared for two openings, one above and one below, large enough for the insertion of one's hand.

Through the upper opening, when finished, the particularly locked portion, the so-called treasury, could be emptied through the lower, the larger compartment.

Hotte drilled very cautiously, and, in order that no metal shavings should fall inside and that the inside might still have an entirely uninjured appearance, he allowed none of the closely adjacent holes, which formed the periphery of the opening to-be, to reach quite through; but both rounds were in such a degree of readiness that a single strong blow with the fist would suffice to force in the part pierced, and form the opening.

For days Hotte worked away at this in all ease. He had time and to spare; and every time he pushed the press back against the wall it was really mere play for the stalwart man. The thick carpet prevented the noise from attracting notice.

Everything was now ready. The confidence-inspiring press that was so carefully locked up in front could be opened from behind by a single pressure in a minute and a half, and yet there was not the least thing in its appearance to awaken suspicion in the minds of the unwary.

The lame man had not again entered the count's palace, so as not to attract the attention of the *portier*, or make him in the least suspicious.

Everything was ready, and they only waited for Bertha to give the signal. With the autumn, the master and mistress had returned to Berlin; but as yet Bertha had not been able to speak the momentous word. Now, they were all weary with waiting; Wildicke even grew ill-natured about it, and threatened.

At last, on the evening of the 21st. of December, the ardently longed-for hour arrived.

"In any event," without promising himself much from the affair, Wildicke had taken the precaution to let Johann always know where he was to be found. And so Hotte had driven to Gottnowstrasse. Without any trouble he found the ale-house designated, viz., the one called in criminal nomenclature "Gray Misery."

The small smoky room, in the middle of which stood a wretched billiard-table covered with oil-cloth, was densely peopled, and loud talking was being carried on by the thirty or forty visitors who were packed together there, some of them playing cards. The atmosphere was so dense and so poisoned by tobacco fumes that Johann, who had gone rapidly, could hardly hear or see. He had some

difficulty in making his way through the line of tables against the wall and the billiard-table to the counter, where were offered for sale sausages, ham, bacon and eggs, coarse hunks of meat, herrings, lampreys, and the like ; on the stand in the rear were ranged bottles of various kinds of drinkables. A placard recommended particularly "ox-cheek salad . . . piquant and delicate" ; and another choice kind of bitters, under the title "death upon cats." Moreover, "mine host" had deemed it necessary to remind his customers of their duty by the production of an ingenious woodcut carrying this delicate inscription :

"The rose blooms yet,
And thorns still prick,
Who'd not forget
His bill pays quick."

Behind the counter stood an oldish, neatly dressed woman with kind eyes, who wore upon her head a tall cap, fantastically tricked off—like a mural crown jagged and indented in wondrous style ; a wide ribbon of rose-colored silk was interwoven with this erection. Hotte asked this person after Mr. Wildicke.

"Wildicke? Wildicke? Ah, yes, you mean Humpback Fritz. There he sits, now! There, in the corner, by the 'hoarse frog'!"

The "hoarse frog" was likewise a well-known housebreaker, whose proper name was Julius Heydel. He had a right good tenor voice, of which he was very proud, and to which he was indebted for his nickname of "hoarse frog." Actually there he sat beneath a wretched chromo, "The Neapolitan Fisher Boy," by Gustave Richter. Hotte tapped him on the shoulder. Wildicke got up as soon as he caught sight of Hotte, and the two left the ale-house, without having exchanged a word.

"Well?" asked Wildicke.

"This very evening!"

"At last! At what time?"

"In no case before twelve. She is at the ball. The carriage is ordered at a quarter before twelve."

"And now it is?"

"About half after ten."

"Then I'll be off directly. I hope that I'll find Rose still in Friedrichstrasse. But as ever—I'll be there ten minutes after twelve."

"You know—the thing is no joke!"

"You are distracted. Just see to providing food for that beast."

"He'll not hurt me."

"The other one manages it by herself. And you! Tell me no tales. You know I'm a good fellow, but I can be disagreeable, too."

"It is done; only I say, too, it is no joke. And a joke it is not, either."

"You are crazy! To-morrow evening, when you have your pockets stuffed full of money, you will think differently about it. But, now—forward! march! I have to go back to the Gray Misery again, though. I have to pay my reckoning. Ten minutes before twelve I'll be there!"

Johann got once more into the drosky that was waiting around the corner. He had to stop on the Palace Square; in the Christmas market he bought a package of gingerbread for the coachman, and two boxes of playthings for the *portier's* children, and then drove to the corner of Behren and Wallstrasse. He paid the coachman—gave him the promised fee—and went the rest of the way to the palace on foot. He went past Bertha's window, and coughed. The window was opened a little, having been merely drawn to.

"He is coming!" said Hotte; and he hummed a little tune. He heard how the window was shut.

Shortly after eleven he rang. He handed the playthings to the *portier*, who was to delight his children with them on holy eve. The *portier* was greatly touched by this attention. Then Hotte repaired to his own room—the window of which looked out upon Wilhelmstrasse—pulled off his street suit, and donned his livery.

"I am to attend the countess," said he to Bob, who was waiting in the front hall. "You can go to sleep."

After he had drawn on his heavy fur overcoat, with its tremendous collar, he climbed upon the box, and twenty minutes before twelve the carriage drew up before the Heddersdorf mansion. While on the box he had peered around in every direction. Wilhelmstrasse was perfectly solitary—a broad, snowy expanse from the square to the Linden!

Wildicke had had some trouble in ridding himself of the "hoarse frog," who wanted to follow him whether or no. He had made all haste to a business friend in the adjacent street, and told him to be on the watch and see to it that a person could get into his house

without attracting attention, for "something was up." Then he had again taken a drosky and been driven to Friedrichstrasse. There he looked about for his Rose among the women who frequent the place at this hour, and he found her, too.

The pair went together to Wilhelmstrasse, chatting sociably as they went.

CHAPTER VII.

A FIRST BALL.

THE cream of Berlin society was assembled in the spacious parlors of Baron von Heddersdorf. For the maintenance of order mounted policemen had been stationed before the house, who shouted out directions to the coachmen.

Among the numerous guests who filled the vaulted dancing-room, and other company rooms opening into it, there was not one who could not have claimed a prominent position, whether by the peculiar favor of fortune or distinction gained by inheritance or desert. There were members of the noblest families, bearers of princely names; the highest officers of the state, both civil and military; men distinguished in science and art—in a word, almost everybody was such a one as a stranger's attention would be called to if he should meet him accidentally upon coming to Berlin. The dancing went on merrily in that lofty hall; the young cavalry officers of the Guards signalized themselves by peculiar assiduity; and, since the season had only just begun, and many met this evening for the first time since last spring, a general spirit of hilarity prevailed.

Alix made her first appearance in this society, the members of which were almost universally known to one another. She excited the greatest attention, and enchanted all by her uncommon loveliness and the sweet girlishness of her blooming form and modest manners, but most of all by the bewitching expression of her fawn-like, dark-blue eyes. As a sole ornament she wore in her chestnut-brown hair a crescent set with gems and at the neck of her dress two gardenias, whose tender white was enhanced by the deep green of their shining satin leaves. Nothing besides—no necklace, no bracelet, no ring. The high temperature of the hall, the dancing, and, above all, joyful excitement, had flushed her cheeks, while

neck, shoulders, and arms displayed that wondrously beautiful tint of white which is peculiar to the camellia, and put to the blush even the pure radiance of the gardenias with which she had adorned herself.

Yes, she was happy !

She felt that she had been met on all sides by the most perfect politeness, nay, with genuine sympathy, and this made her cheerful and glad. And the brilliancy of the assemblage, the costly toilets of the ladies, the magnificent and well-fitting uniforms of the gentlemen, the gayety of the scene, and the intoxicating music—all these had for her unpracticed eye and ear, for her inexperienced mind, something that was blinding and deafening, something well-nigh intoxicating. And it seemed to her that she would never be done bowing and courtesying, so many were they who sued for an introduction. And everything passed off so easily ; she had fancied that being introduced into society was a much more complicated affair. Had she known this she would certainly not have tormented poor Liane so, who had manifested so much extreme reluctance to attending the ball.

As for the rest, it was incomprehensible that Liane should have a repugnance to taking part in so glorious a *fête*. To be sure, it was all no novelty to her, who had taken part in so many such scenes during the five years of her married life. But that was no reason for not enjoying such pleasures. How could any one ever weary of them !

Good Liane ! she had kept her word and come ! She was as pretty as a picture, though, and so piquant and so original !

Beside the delicate little Liane, with her topaz-tinted skin, her raven hair, and sparkling eyes, with the animated expression of her countenance, the briskness and alertness of her movements, Alix told herself that she appeared unsentimentally robust and uninteresting. How becoming to her were those exquisite lace and pearls ! As a matter of course, this fascinating woman was overwhelmed with attentions, but she did not seem to care for them ; she was evidently out of sorts, rather absent-minded and languid. Alix, therefore, studiously avoided giving her any worry. Everything with her moved on swimmingly, leaving her nothing to desire. She had only whispered a few affectionate words in her cousin's ear in passing to and fro, and given her a friendly nod ; but Liane was so *distracte* that she hardly seemed to be conscious of her presence.

If Alix had been entirely candid with herself she would have been obliged to admit that she who had laid such great stress upon her cousin's support had well-nigh forgotten Liane. And, if she had gone yet further in her fair dealing, she would have had to confess that the real reason of her thorough enjoyment of this, her first ball, with all the flattering attentions that it had brought her, was the fact that *he* was near and had said that she looked charming ; because *his* arm was about her waist as she trod the mazes of the dance. Prince Ulrich was an excellent dancer, too, for in his early youth he had conceived the ambition to overcome by artistic culture the difficulties thrown in his way by the inherited weakness of his left foot. How happy was she to place her arm confidently in his, and to hold unreserved and delightful converse with him as they threaded their way through the throng of guests !

She had never been so much alone with him as in these crowded halls. And he was so agreeable, so cordial, and, at the same time, so reverential in his courtesy, that she had no need to be upon her guard, and could give utterance without reserve to any silly thought that entered her brain and to the rapture with which her heart was filled. He himself :

" Within close bounds his passion pent,
Nor dared to give his feelings vent."

She knew perfectly why he was so rational. If he could have followed the dictates of his heart, he would never have kept within such bounds. She was positive on that point. But he had certainly promised papa or mamma, and he was obliged to keep his word.

It was all one, though. The worst was over. Five months more—no, not even five months more ; properly only four. January, February, March, April. December was almost gone, and the few days in May were hardly worth counting—four good months more, and then would come her seventeenth birthday, and then everything would be different. And now his leave of absence was prolonged, so that he was going to stay in Berlin for the present, perhaps for a long time, perhaps until May. That would be too delightful ! That her own stay at Berlin would have to be prolonged beyond the time originally set for it gave her no trouble whatever. She could soon persuade her mamma to gratify her on that point. In a word, she was blissfully happy.

Ever again the two found themselves together, infallibly and

involuntarily. And when they chanced to meet in the social stream they had forgotten that they had been apart.

The time which they had been obliged to waste upon others had been passed by them dreamily; the only true reality for them was found in communion.

Apparently Prince Ulrich troubled himself no more about Princess Alix than about other pretty young ladies, and, in her association with any other gentleman who danced with her, Princess Alix was just as maidenly, affable, and pleasant as toward the prince. Prince Engelbert and Carola, who were close observers, were therefore well pleased with the deportment of the young people.

The only one who felt the full truth, like a wound inflicted by a cold, blunt tool, was Countess Juliane.

She possessed, it is true, the gift of self-control in no ordinary degree, but even that failed her on this occasion. Her nostrils quivered, and there was a twitching about the corners of her mouth. She looked like a sufferer in mind and body, and Councilor of Legation Berwitz inquired sympathetically after her health.

"That stupid headache, nothing more. Really, I ought not to have come, and, at all events, shall take my departure speedily, since I see that I shall not be missed at all. You see, I came to chaperon my cousin, Alix Eyckhof; but she will get on perfectly well without me. Do you know my cousin?"

"I am perfectly charmed with the young princess—perfectly, like everybody else."

"And she is charming, too! And such a child! She knows nothing of the world yet—and of headache."

"Let us hope that these unpleasant acquaintances may be spared her as long as possible. Princess Alix is one of those persons whom one can never fancy as anything else than young, merry, and sound to the core. Prince Engernheim and I match in our enthusiasm for your charming cousin, and we also agree in the opinion that there is only one beauty, viz., health."

"Really, you are gallant to say that to me this evening, when I am a victim to headache."

"You know very well, fair countess, that you are incomparable where I am concerned, and Prince Ulrich, too."

"Has Prince Ulrich given you authority to make this declaration?"

"I do not need any authority; I know it."

"Well, it is pleasant to have you comfort me, for he has treated me badly this evening."

"Why, you ought not to take our good friend's conduct ill. Remember what a toast he is in society, and people whom he regards with indifference yet take up so much of his time with their astonishment at seeing him here and manifold superfluous questions that he can devote but little attention to us, his good friends, upon whose indulgent consideration he can reckon. Besides, he pays a little court to your fascinating cousin, as in duty bound."

"How 'in duty bound'?"

"Why, to speak generally, in duty bound, for Princess Alix has a claim to it, and, in duty bound particularly, because they renew here an acquaintance formed at Scheveningen Springs."

"Scheveningen! Ah! to be sure! I had heard of that, but did not pay any attention to it. That explains a great deal."

Juliane fanned herself, and opened her lips as if about to smile. She leaned back a little. She was not at all disposed to smile.

"And, of course, we must retire before such acquaintances," continued Berwitz, artlessly. "We must not be surprised if we are badly treated. My part need not be mentioned. Men have the reputation of using little ceremony with their male friends. But you, dearest lady, have dropped into the second place here without there being any occasion for your feeling hurt through vanity, much less pride. Prince Ulrich can admire, honor, esteem you; he can not marry you, because you have put this out of his power by your own action. Princess Alix, on the contrary, he could very well marry; and, while I am chatting thus with you, it just strikes me that the two are made for each other—birth, fortune, amiability—everything suits! I do not understand how it is that he has not married her before."

"Ask him about it some time, or send him to me; I'll ask him about it myself."

"Speak a good word for him, sweet lady! You know both, and are a born mediator. It is said that even the youngest and fairest ladies are not averse to engaging in such disinterested offices."

"Then send the prince to me."

"As soon as I can come up with him."

"Ah! never mind! He has engaged me for the contra-dance. I had almost forgotten it."

Berwitz withdrew. He had made himself disagreeable for the

first time. He had always been so amiable before. Why just to-night so unbearable?

Why had she not thought of Scheveningen!

Alix had mentioned in her letters that she was a great deal with Ulrich Engernheim. And—provoking that she should notice it now for the first time!—just about that time his letters had suddenly assumed such a totally different tone; indeed, almost entirely ceased, having changed from voluntary confidences into enforced formalities. It had occurred to her that something feminine lurked in the background from the fickleness which she had heard attributed to the prince. But how could she have thought of him in connection with Alix, that child, who was still happy with her dolls?

But now the chain of her forebodings and conjectures were welded into certainty by this last link of their being together at Scheveningen.

Then came Alix.

And as Juliane saw standing before her this lovely maiden in the freshness and innocence of her budding womanhood, her breast contracted painfully, and she was conscious of acute suffering.

"What is the matter with you, Liane?" asked Alix, while she sat down by her upon the seat that Herr von Berwitz had just left. "I reproach myself for having exposed you to suffering on my account. You do look really ill! I am not at all satisfied with you."

"Nor I with you," answered Juliane, in a tone so sharp that Alix opened her eyes wide, and looked at her in utter amazement.

"Dear me, what have I done?" asked she, anxiously.

"Nothing, nothing, Ali!" added Juliane, soothingly, for she was ashamed of her unjust, hateful impulse.

"And yet, Juliane, you are hiding something from me. You only want to spare my feelings. Tell me what it is. I should be grateful to you! I am so happy this evening that I would not willingly do anything wrong. Have your feelings been hurt by my concerning myself so little about you? Then, pardon me, Liane! And I know you will, after you learn everything."

"I have already pardoned you, because I have guessed," replied Juliane.

"Really guessed?" asked Alix, upon whose features the solicitous expression of a while ago had been chased away by another of her bright, childlike smiles. "Then I must have begun very awk-

wardly, or you are wofully wise. I fancied that I was disguising my feelings so beautifully."

"At Scheveningen, wasn't it?" asked Juliane, with effort. "It began there, didn't it?"

Alix had no need to answer, for her eyes had already given affirmation to the question.

"Have you seen each other again since?"

"To-day for the first time."

"Here?"

"No! He breakfasted with us at noon."

Juliane leaned back on the sofa and fanned herself violently. He had come from Alix when he had called upon her.

"Have you been corresponding?" she went on, as if bent upon self-torture.

"Of course we have, but with mamma's consent."

"Ali, Ali!" Julian exerted herself to threaten her sportively with her fan. "No subterfuges?"

"No, no, indeed!"

"But have you written often to each other?"

"Very often, almost every day these last months."

"Then it is already as good as settled."

"It seems so," smiled Alix. "It is too comical. Properly we have not breathed a syllable on the subject to each other. The word 'betrothal' has not yet been dropped either by him or my parents. And yet we understand each other perfectly. Hush! There they come!"

"Ah, to be sure, the contra-dance for which Prince Ulrich has engaged me," said Juliane, with a faint smile.

There were indeed approaching the two ladies Prince Ulrich and the brilliant young barrister Von Dürenborn, his dear friend. The latter had been among the Saxo-Bonissians at Heidelberg, when Prince Von Engernheim had entered that institution as a freshman. These two had been talking together for a long time.

"I do not know whether it is exactly the thing to be seen there," said Von Dürenborn, "but Berwitz and Pagger have been persuading me so long, that, at last I had to say yes. They have taken a box high up, and assure me that one need not be seen unless he please to. They warrant plenty of gay company on hand. I am to go, then, apparently before supper, with those fellows to Kroll's. You'll come with us, will you not?"

"I can not promise, but I'll probably come after—if it is not too late. I have four and twenty hours of railroad traveling in my limbs."

"Try to come if possible. We would all be delighted."

"I'll see about it. At Kroll's, then—do you know the number of the box?"

"Box three, the large one in the middle."

"And how long does the sport last?"

"Ah, until toward morning, I suspect."

The orchestra struck up.

"The contra-dance!" exclaimed Herr von Dürenborn. "I have engaged the lovely Princess von Eyckhof as my partner."

"And I the Countess Iseneck. We can dance *vis-à-vis*," suggested Ulrich. "That will be fine!"

The gentlemen stepped up to the ladies, and, with a low bow, each bore off his partner in the dance. Juliane paused to readjust her lace, and drew out something that she had stuck under her belt, and thrust it into the opening of her left glove.

Juliane was deeply moved, and trembled, as she allowed Prince Ulrich to lead her to her place. The gay throng floated about her unheeded.

While the orchestra was making the preliminary flourishes, and the dancers exchanging the first salutations, Juliane whispered to the prince:

"I have something to say to you, and this very evening!"

"Whenever you please, honored lady."

"I shall quit the ball about midnight, and expect you about one o'clock. Do you understand?"

While she was thus speaking, she had pressed into the prince's hand a little object that she had taken from the opening of her left-hand glove, opportunity being given for this as she had to offer him her hand when the time came to *balancer*. It was a little, flat American key, nickel-plated and jagged.

The prince was utterly perplexed. He could not reply to her directly, since in the course of the figure he had to leave her for a few minutes. Nevertheless, the following lively dialogue was begun and carried on to the end, amid the perpetual interruptions caused by participation in the shifting figures of this familiar dance.

"It is impossible, gracious lady!" said Ulrich, in the most cordial and reverential manner. "I humbly implore you to allow me

to postpone my explanation just for a few days, and believe me when I say I dare not."

"You never should have dared, and still you did!"

"I can not justify myself in this situation," whispered the prince, with a glance at Alix, who smiled back at him. "I dare not obey your order. I tell you I can not."

"And I insist that you shall—I know all! Do you not believe—do you not fear that through force or artifice, with the weapons of jealousy or wrath I shall win back what has been wrested from me? True, I may never have possessed it, only fancied that it was mine! You will not put so low an estimate upon me!"

"Attention, prince," called Alix, from the other side, to which he had now to advance, and where he had to make a low bow.

"I told you so," resumed the countess, when Ulrich again stood at her side. "I had no idea of making a scene and playing the wretched part of the forsaken Elvira. But I will not submit to be set aside silently. I demand of you to meet me and give me a hearing. I think this is not to ask too much!"

"I'll tell you everything just as soon as I am permitted to speak. And nobody is to hear of it, from me, before you. I may not be able to disarm your just indignation, but, through my perfect candor, I shall make the effort to obtain, at least, a mitigation of my sentence. I myself feel urgent need for having an explanation with you, and the feelings of grateful and fervent respect that I owe you should preclude any misconstruction of the silence that is still imposed upon me."

"You may have reason for silence, I reason for speech. And I *will* speak this very night, too. I do not make a simple request, I demand it as a right! To-morrow I shall no longer be by myself. I will tell you before this night is over what value I set upon your fine speeches about deep and grateful respect. There awaits you, to be sure, a dubious gratification. And it is in your power to avoid the unpleasantness. You can allege the most cogent reasons. You can make yourself comfortable! You will be at no loss for a pretext. Indeed you have duties—to others! And you were bold enough to point this out to me. I shall not inquire whether you have not some duties to me as well—though they were the most miserable of any in the world—the duties of circumspection. Therefore do not come, if you choose to let me wait in vain for you at the broad window. But, then, you will at least allow me the right to

deem you—what until now I never would have believed of you—as cowardly.”

Ulrich turned pale. He started and involuntarily took a step backward.

“Promenade all!” shouted the leader of the orchestra.

He offered Juliane his arm and forced a smile, while he escorted the trembling little woman, and said to her in a low tone as he stooped down to her:

“I am no coward, I’ll come about one— You have said a very wrong thing. You little suspect how wrong. I feel as if you were largely responsible for no small share of my guilt.”

“Ladies change!”

When he felt the arm of the lovely Alix within his own he drew a breath of relief, and involuntarily gave it a gentle pressure. Alix glanced inquiringly at him and then lowered her eyes, penetrated by the blissful consciousness of being beloved. Not a word, however, passed his lips. Alix felt that he had some adequate reason for silence, and was entirely satisfied. With a bewitching smile she glided back to her partner.

Conversation had ceased, too, between Juliane and Ulrich. After the dance was finished the prince led Juliane back to her place, bowed low, and turned off.

“I shall steal away directly,” said the countess to her cousin. “Make my apologies to your mother for not having bidden her good-night. I really do not feel at all well.”

“I can see it in your looks, Liane! May you soon, soon be yourself again! I’ll call early to-morrow to find out how you are getting along.”

“Adieu, Ali!”

Juliane succeeded in making her exit unobserved. In the ante-room Johann was already on the watch, and proceeded to put on his mistress’s fur overshoes and envelop her in a long fur cloak. There speedily followed her several deserters, who hurried off before supper, in order to spend a few hours at the ball at Kroll’s.*

Ulrich had escorted Alix to supper.

“Of course you’ll stay until the close of the ball?” said Ulrich, after they had talked over everything that can be thought about.

“And you, of course, will go earlier,” replied Alix. “Do not think

* Kroll’s is a popular garden in Berlin, in which is a theatre, concert-room, etc.—TRANSLATOR.

that I shall feel hurt at this. Even in the contra-dance I noticed that you seemed a little tired. And why shouldn't you, after that long journey? So, pray do not stay out of consideration for me! I implore you not to! What you need is a good, sound night's sleep."

"You are a very angel of goodness," answered Ulrich. "Whether there will be much of that good sleep," added he, smiling, "I really don't know. But I should like to slip away after supper, without attracting any notice or saying good evening to any one but you."

"I shall probably be dancing and talking on, in my dreams, long after I have laid down to rest."

"And to-morrow at noon I'll call and find out how you feel after the ball."

"Don't come before one. Between twelve and one I shall be with my Cousin Iseneck. Poor Liane is not feeling well."

"After breakfast, then, about two, you may expect me."

The hostess had given the signal for leaving the table. The guests arose, and the servants obsequiously drew back their chairs. The prince led Alix into the chief parlor, silently held out his hand to her, and took his leave of her with a long, silent gaze of mutual intelligence. At the same time a young officer of the Guards had approached the princess in order to inform himself as to whether the doubt which had arisen as to her engagement for the dance about to come off had been settled in his favor, and whether he might not now claim the honor of dancing the cotillion with her? The princess's hand had been so much sought after that it was natural enough for some confusion to exist in her dancing-card.

Alix answered in the affirmative, with an amiable smile, and was led off in triumph by the young officer.

"How is this, prince? A young man like you to escape from the fray in secret thus! You ought to leave such a mode of procedure to us old men!"

It was the jovial old Director Hillstadt who addressed these words to Prince Ulrich, in a jocular tone, while his servant was drawing on his overcoat for him, and he himself was encircling his neck with a huge muffler.

"Ah, is that you, Herr Director? I had not seen you before! Well, in the first place, it is no longer so early—"

"Ten minutes before one," remarked Hillstadt, who had just pulled out his watch.

"And then," continued Ulrich, "I promise myself another hour at Kroll's. I expect to meet several of my friends there."

"Then you are certainly excusable, dear sir! Is it to Kroll's that you are going? If you have no carriage I could take you with me. My home is in *den Zellen*, and so I drive directly past!"

They went down-stairs together.

"How kind you are, Herr Director! But I have not exactly made up my mind—and, besides, I feel the need of a little walk."

"Zounds!" exclaimed Hillstadt, while he shivered from cold. They had got out upon the street. A fierce snow-storm was raging, and the wind hurled flakes cuttingly into their faces.

"I am a hunter!" remarked Ulrich, as he assisted the old gentleman into his carriage, "and tolerably weather-proof!"

"Well, I prefer riding," said Hillstadt, settling himself comfortably in his small coupé, drawing the robe over his knees, and calling out to the prince laughingly, as he shut the door, wishing him good-night.

"Much enjoyment of your peregrinations, your highness!"

The prince had drawn up the tall, standing collar of his fur robe until his face was quite buried in it.

It snowed pitilessly. The gas jets cast but a feeble light, and they shone with a lurid and red glare through the thick white mass that was wrapping them about. The snow lay a foot deep upon the pavement; the prince sank into it above his ankles, and at the street-crossings it was still deeper. With head bent forward, eyes half closed, perspiring beneath the weight of his heavy furs, and disagreeably affected by the moist warmth of his own breath, which the collar returned to his face, he moved forward as fast as was possible under these obstructions.

In Behrenstrasse it had still been tolerably lively. On both sides of the street stood long rows of private equipages and carriages for hire; coachmen and servants cursing the gentlefolk who were up there enjoying themselves in that warm room, made as bright as day by wax tapers, where they were eating, drinking, and dancing to the sound of music. The high-bred horses stamped impatiently; raising and lowering their heads, inflating their nostrils, and neighing, while the poor overworked drosky hacks, who had long been

inured to all the asperities of stormy weather, let their heads hang down sorrowfully, and stood doggedly to take whatever came.

In Wilhelm and Voss Strassen, however, not a creature was astir. The policemen had probably sought shelter beneath the doorways from this furious assault on the part of the wintry night sky.

The prince took longer strides as he went past Prince Eyckhof's palace. At the end of Vossstrasse he turned off to the right into Königgrätzerstrasse. He now proceeded more slowly. Now and then the fall of snow was so violent in its capricious outbursts that the prince could not see five steps in advance of him. He found, however, the door that he was looking for, and it seemed to him as if there was about to be a lull in the storm. The flakes seemed to fall more lightly and to be fewer in number.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BURGLARY.

A FEW minutes before midnight the carriage rolled up before the door of the Iseneck palace. Johann opened the carriage-door, and inquired whether the countess had any further orders, and upon receiving a negative answer withdrew. Bertha, who had been waiting in the front hall, followed her mistress into the park room. Nero came leaping and barking to meet Juliane, and could not be quieted until she patted him upon his broad forehead. The countess's maid behaved to-day in the most awkward manner while she was assisting the countess to disrobe; her face was unusually flushed, so that for a moment the suspicion arose in Juliane's mind that Bertha had taken advantage of her absence to drink a glass of wine too much. She had for a long time been discontented with Bertha. If Juliane had been of a suspicious nature, and had considered it worth her while to subject the girl's behavior to a more careful examination, she would have observed, since a certain day, a very noticeable change in her, although Bertha was an adept in the art of deception, and was apparently as humble as she had always been. And yet a change had taken place. Juliane had noticed this, and it was not at all disagreeable to her that Bertha had given her notice that she would leave her service in April, in order to marry Johann

Hotte. After Juliane had put on her *peignoir* and loosened her hair, which was now hanging over her shoulders down to her knees, in long braids, she ordered Bertha to take the lace of her dress and fold it up, and then bring the pearls and the "Lamoral" and follow her. She herself locked these treasures up in the iron safe, and kept the key. Nero did not leave her side. She then dismissed Bertha, who wished her a good-night, bowed, and left the room.

Bertha was trembling from head to foot when she reached the dark passage. With heart beating violently, and panting for breath, she very carefully groped her way to the right, toward the door leading into the dressing-room, gently turned the knob, and left the door ajar, so that it could now be opened without the least noise.

Nero must have known that everything was not in order. All at once he stood still, pricked up his ears, and then sprang toward the canvas-door. But, as everything remained quiet, he returned to his mistress, and pressed himself fawningly upon her.

Bertha had taken off her shoes and walked up-stairs in her stocking-feet, upon the soft carpeted stairway. Johann was already awaiting her at the broad hall-window that opened on the park.

It was a very dark night. The broad window could only be distinguished from the nocturnal darkness without by a faint, gray light. The snow-storm was raging on the outside. Now and then the wind howled in lamentable tones, and great masses of snow would fall from the branches of the trees to the ground with a most weird noise, or would loosen itself from the slanting roofs, and rush down like an avalanche. They took hands and stood close together by the window; but did not speak a word.

Bertha was almost beside herself with fright. She wanted to creep away—her knees were trembling—but Johann held her back. Fright had seized him also by the throat. He did not want to be left alone.

Amid all her paralyzing fear a feeling of utter contempt for this chicken-hearted coward took possession of her, who evidently needed the assistance of a weak woman in the execution of his deed. Wildicke was an entirely different sort of a man! What good could she now do? In accordance with Wildicke's directions she had only desired to see whether Johann was also at his post; so her presence could certainly now be dispensed with. He had just as good eyes as she had, and in spite of the darkness he certainly would be able to see whether anything was astir in the snow-white park.

And Nero would prevent anything of that sort. She was indignant that he should keep her back. She was trembling, and her knees were knocking together ; but Johann held her firmly in his shaking grasp. He would take the decisive step alone, but she must remain with him now ! And thus they stood and waited !

Juliane walked up and down the room, at one moment in nervous haste, the next slowly, as if in deep thought. She picked her way through the various articles of furniture that were standing around the room in confusion, and whose disorderly arrangement lent to the spacious chamber its special characteristic. Lighted lamps were standing upon the large center-table and upon the little table in the corner, and cast only a faint light around the room. Nero followed close upon her heels, and from time to time touched his mistress gently with his nose to remind her of his presence.

"Yes, you noble animal, you are faithful !" she said, amid her burning tears, while she patted the dog gently, and so overcome was he with delight that he wagged his tail until his whole powerful frame trembled. "You are faithful and strong. One word from me, one cluck with my tongue, one glance only, and you would seize that faithless man by the throat and strangle him to death ! You might be my avenger ! If I only had the courage to make you do it, and then send a bullet through my own heart ! But I am a coward, a miserable coward !"

She petted the dog, pressed him to her tenderly, and laid her cheek against his broad forehead. Nero stood as motionless as though he were made of brass. He only curled his nose slightly when her long, black tresses tickled him.

She went to the window, and then to the broad glass door. Her brow was burning. She pushed back the light curtain, and pressed her hot head against the cold, damp window-pane. It gave her relief. What a fearful storm was raging on the outside !

But, however much it blew and howled and stormed on the outside, there was a far more terrible storm going on within her. She stepped back, shaken with a paroxysm of fever. Her throat was parched and her tongue was burning. She lighted a candle and stepped into the empty, quiet, and dark adjoining room, in which a small medicine-press was suspended above the count's bed. Nero followed her. She took out an effervescent powder, and returned with Nero into the large room. There she prepared the refreshing, foaming drink, and emptied the glass in one draught. But it was,

in truth, only a drop upon a parched stone. The heat that seemed to be devouring her vitals only became more unendurable. Once more she approached the wide, double doors, and gazed out at the snow-storm, which seemed to be gradually diminishing in fierceness.

She shuddered when the clock on the mantel-piece, which usually did not attract her attention, struck one. Her heart began to beat violently. She knew he must soon be there.

Suddenly Nero, who had all this while been standing quietly behind her, with his powerful head resting upon her soft cashmere wrapper, sprang forward in great excitement, rushed to the door, and raised his head as though he wished to look through the glass door out into the park, and began to bark.

She gave him a gentle tap, and called to him, imperiously, "Be quiet, Nero!"

A moment afterward she saw a tall, dark form enter the park and turn to the left into the narrow side-walk beneath the trees. She seized the dog, who continued to strive uneasily to reach the door, and seemed to have to make great efforts to obey his mistress's command to stop barking, and she dragged him impetuously into her dressing-room, which was now only meagerly illuminated by the reflection from the park room, and stationed him in front of the iron safe.

"Lie down, Nero!" she commanded him, and, raising her finger in a threatening manner, added, with sharp emphasis: "Don't make such an ado! Be quiet, Nero! Lie down!"

She withdrew hastily, closed the door between the two rooms, and bolted it. Nero remained by the safe engaged in a sore conflict with his instinctive desire for a fight, opened his mouth to an appalling extent, and yawned nervously, uttering a sharp, piercing sound, that ended in a deep growl.

Juliane had turned the key in the park door and stepped back to the center of the room. By an impatient movement of her head she threw back from her face her luxuriant, long, black hair, and it fell in waving masses down her back.

The door was gently opened and again closed.

The prince was covered with snow from head to foot. He had removed his hat, and the snow that had collected in its folds and upon its brim fell upon the floor. Upon his shoulders, cuffs, and in the folds of his fur-coat it had collected in lumps, and lay in sheets upon his shoes and the bottoms of his trousers. While Ulrich took

off his fur-coat he stamped several times vigorously upon the carpet at the entrance, and the white, fleecy masses rolled off his shoes. He laid his coat and hat upon the Steinway piano, as it stood conveniently near.

"Well, here I am, gracious countess," he said, bowing. "Even your humors are for me commands, although I can not conceal from you the fact that it was this time rather difficult for me to obey your orders. You have already forewarned me that you would have some ugly truths to tell me. I asked myself, could not this have been done under conditions involving less risks for you than these you have selected?"

"You have all at once become wonderfully solicitous about the preservation of my good name!"

"I grant that I have heretofore been guilty of grievous sins of omission in this respect. Aye, gracious countess," continued the prince, with much warmth, "I confess to you my guilt, my great and awful guilt! I have nothing to urge in my defense, nothing save that I was young, foolish, completely dazzled by the charms of an enchanting woman; and, in my intoxication, did not know what I was doing, and how, in my madness, I was dragging along with me another who trusted me, who loved me. That is my sin against you, and I shall not attempt to weaken its force by miserable commonplaces, nor can I mitigate its sting by the assurance of my sincere and earnest repentance. My sin lies in the past, and the past, alas! is not capable of change. But I will at least keep the present free from the sin of hypocrisy. If I have heretofore deceived you—unknowingly, I can say, with the utmost truth—as to my feelings for you, I will not now knowingly tell you a falsehood. And it would be a shameful lie were I to approach you now as I used to do. Your own pride would forbid you to—"

"My pride?" interrupted Juliane, with incisive sarcasm. "My pride? Ah, you do well to speak of my pride! You, who know so well how much of it you have left me—how little!"

In a voice that evinced deep emotion and remorse the prince replied:

"It will not be difficult for you, countess, to seal my lips. As soon as you remind me how deeply I am in debt to you I am defenseless. The situation is unbearable for you as well as for me. If you insist upon your rights, then accept the ultimate consequence of your action! If you will not agree to loosen the bonds that have

bound me to you, then tell me so plainly ! And as certainly as I am standing before you, I am prepared to accept the consequences. Aye, be they what they may ! You know that I am not accustomed to using mere empty phrases. I have been thinking of this for months, from that moment when our paths were compelled to separate. I turned the thought over and over in my mind when I again set foot on German soil, and while I was on my way to your house I could think of nothing else. I see no way of escape if you oppose me, no other on earth than the one that offers a way of escape from anything and everything. Great God, what can I do ? I can not remain in your debt, God knows I can not ! And a moral debt never loses its power ! If you will not destroy the evidence of my debt—”

He did not complete his sentence. Nero began to growl in the next room most furiously.

The countess turned pale, and sprang toward the door.

“Be quiet, Nero !” she cried, angrily, and with all the strength she could command. “Be quiet ! Won’t you be still ? Lie down, I tell you !”

The dog seemed to make the utmost efforts to obey his mistress’s command. He had stopped barking. But there was something powerful and irrepressible at work within him that involuntarily defied even his mistress’s commands and found expression in a deep, rumbling growl, in the suppressed utterance of a short and fearfully smothered sound.

“You must be still ! Be quiet !” cried Juliane once more, through the door. Nero continued, however, to growl in the most uncontrollable ill-humor, and began to scratch violently at the door, whining in the most piteous way.

“Lie down !” cried Juliane, angrily. The dog suddenly became quiet. It seemed that he had discovered a way that enabled him to reconcile his conflicting duties of keeping quiet in obedience to his mistress’s command, and, at the same time, of warning and protecting her. He sprang to the door that led into the vestibule and laid himself at full length before it. If there were an intruder in the room, it would not be an easy matter for him to escape with his life.

“The faithful animal has no intelligence,” said Juliane, who was trembling with agitation, “but he seems to feel intuitively what an unheard-of insult is being inflicted upon his mistress—what

a gross indignity is being heaped upon her! What's that?" she groaned, suddenly, in a hoarse voice. She turned ashy pale.

The prince likewise was startled. Nero uttered a deep growl; sounds like the distant mutterings of an approaching storm issued forth from his throat.

"What is it?" she repeated, feebly. She tottered. The prince rushed toward her and caught her.

From the next room now came a startling sound, as if from a blow upon something metallic, and then a dull crash. Both the countess and the prince were terrified.

"Robbers!" gasped Juliane.

The prince nodded assent.

"Your husband has fire-arms, has he not?"

"Yes—no—yes—why? For God's sake, you do not intend to—"

The prince did not heed her. He seized the lamp and rushed toward the count's chamber. She sprang after him, and stood in his way.

"For God's sake, what are you thinking of?" she cried, in a feeble, hollow voice. "Are you in your right mind? Go! quickly! There are your things! Leave this place at once!"

"You are raving, countess! You expect me to leave you here alone in danger of your life while I steal away like a coward?"

"Leave, I tell you! Never mind what happens. You must not be discovered here!"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the prince, with determination. "Then we can defy everything. They are bound to discover me here now. And if we are found, what difference does it make? Then it will be the decree of Fate that we shall remain together!"

"You are so magnanimous!" replied Juliane, in the bitterness of despair. "But I have not yet lost all self-respect. I command you to withdraw; if you do not respect my command, as truly as I am standing before you now I will set the dog on you!"

"Your beseeching might possibly have prevailed upon me to go; your threat nails me firmly in my tracks!"

"Oh, I shall go mad!" exclaimed Juliane, bursting into convulsive sobs. "I beg you, I implore you, Ulrich—by all that I have ever been to you—I implore you here, upon my knees, go—please, please go!"

Her head had fallen forward, and her magnificent hair enveloped her form like a shining black fleece.

"It is impossible!" replied Ulrich, deeply moved by the helplessness of the unfortunate woman. "I can not leave you."

"Ulrich!" she implored, trembling and weeping. "You spoke of your debt. You can pay it all now! Need you prove to me that you are not a coward? Show that higher courage—the power to conquer your courage—now. Let them rob me of all I possess—it is a matter of indifference to me. But reflect only, if you were discovered here now—here at this hour—then more would be lost than life and property."

"But you are defenseless?"

"No!" she cried, her eyes suddenly flashing up—"the dog!" She sprang to her feet.

"Very well. Call the dog. We will bar all the doors, then I will go."

She went noiselessly toward the dressing-room door, which could only be bolted from her room. The prince followed close upon her heels, and stationed himself immediately behind her. She carefully and noiselessly pushed the bolt back, and, with the utmost precaution, protecting herself behind the door, called out: "Nero!"

At the same moment the dog gave a mighty bound forward and forced his way through the narrow opening just made.

She closed the door again, directly, and bolted it.

The noise next door, something strange and indescribable—no longer knocking and hammering, rather a grating, scraping sound—lasted some little while longer.

Nero jumped around his mistress, wagging his tail and making touching demonstrations of joy. He left the prince undisturbed, after he had sniffed at him. Now he concerned himself solely about Juliane, now he was sure that no harm could come to his mistress.

The prince had bolted and locked the door that led from the hall into the chamber; he took the lamp into the next room, the countess walking at his side. The little physic press still stood open. She tried the bolt of the door leading into the hall—it was locked; the door to the study likewise locked. She returned to the large park chamber. The prince let down the creaking metal blinds to the two windows.

"Put the bar before the glass door!" he implored.

Now he might, indeed, withdraw somewhat comforted in mind, for nobody could come near the countess, and Nero was at her side.

"As soon as I am gone, press upon the bell until somebody comes. Alarm the whole house!"

Meanwhile he had thrown on his furred coat, and picked up his hat.

"Go! Nothing can happen to me!" gasped Juliane.

"Farewell, countess!"

The prince left the room. He ran hurriedly down-stairs and straight through the middle of the walk to the outer gate.

It had ceased to snow. The storm had worn itself out almost at the very instant in which the prince entered the park chamber.

The countess looked after him. Now he opened the gate to Königgrätzerstrasse; now it was closed. Nothing more was astir in that white park.

She closed the glass door, drew down the curtains again, and also closed the double iron door, and, panting with a great effort of strength, she laid the iron bar across it.

She dragged herself to the electric bell, and incessantly pressed upon the button. Its loud, clear tones sounded piercingly shrill in the stillness of the night.

She was almost exhausted, and could hardly stand; and, while her finger pressed tenaciously upon the white knob, her breathing was loud and difficult, her bosom heaved tumultuously, and her head moved up and down, automatically keeping time with her labored breathing. A long, long time—so at least it seemed to her—as if a little eternity elapsed until something stirred in the hall outside. Bertha, to whose room a special conductor carried the sound of the bell, was the first to arrive. In disarray, as if just aroused from sleep and greatly terrified, she had hurried to the rear of the house. She knocked vigorously upon the door. "My lady!" she shouted from the hall.

"At last! Is it you, Bertha?" The countess had lifted her finger from the knob, and hurried to the door. "Awaken the *portier*, Johann, the coachman—everybody! Thieves! There have been robbers here!"

"For heaven's sake!" shrieked Bertha, horrified. And she ran off, breathless, to obey her mistress's orders.

A few of the servants were already awake, and got themselves ready as fast as they could. Others had to be shaken out of their sleep, first by loud knocking at their doors, and then by loud calls; but, ere the men had provided themselves with whatever weapons

they had at hand and assembled in front of the locked door in the hall—for the countess had given orders that they should keep still until this was the case—again an interminable length of time seemed to expire. Those few minutes dragged along in mortal weariness.

The countess had dropped into a chair, and in her nervous over-excitement began to sob and cry. Nero laid his head on her lap.

Meanwhile, exactly at the same moment when the prince, having passed through the gateway had reached Königgrätzerstrasse, one of the windows of the basement of the first wing where the men-servants slept—Hotte's window, that is to say—was opened. It faced upon Wilhelmstrasse. On the other side of the deserted street a man was quietly wending his way. He had good eyes, and noticed the glittering reflection of the gas-jet upon the shaking disk. At a still slower, somewhat impeded, pace he now passed through the deep snow over the causeway, casting peering glances on all sides. Not a watchman was to be seen, nor any other living creature.

He moved on still more slowly, and after he had reached the latticed window he paused, and said in a low, but distinct voice :

“Now for it !”

Then a medium-sized package, in form like a pillow—something soft, evidently—was thrust through the window, and fell upon the pavement. The fellow in the street stooped, and tucked it under his overcoat.

“Anything more ?”

“Yes,” came from the inside.

A hand was stuck out of the window and reached some object to the person outside, who slipped it into his pocket. This same thing was repeated several times.

“That is all !” whispered the trembling voice of the man from the basement. The window was closed.

The night-walker again went on his quiet way. In the middle of the dark Wilhelm Square he found a trim girl, who joined him. He swept the snow off the bench with his hand, and said :

“Sit down, Rose. You must dispose of that somewhere.” He handed her the bundle. Rose had put on the underskirt with the unfathomable pocket, for the pattern of which she had to thank her beloved. The lace vanished forthwith.

“And, now, don't lose anything ! It seems to be costly. One, a string of pearls ; two, a pearl bracelet.”

While he drew the things from his pocket and counted them out, he handed them to Rose singly, who raised her dress, and let them glide one by one into the depths of her hidden pocket. "Three, something else made out of pearls."

"A diadem! Oh, but that is beautiful!" cried Rose.

"Four, a ring; five, another ring; six, seven, eight, three more rings—so, five rings in all; nine, bracelet set with blue stones; ten, necklace, it looks like, set with blue stones, too."

"Sapphires!"

"Eleven, diamond necklace." He searched his pockets. "Here is one more ring—thunder and lightning! A huge diamond! On the whole, beside the bundle, which I suppose is the lace—twelve in number—among them six rings, three pearl sets, two things with blue stones, and a diamond necklace! For heaven's sake, lose nothing! Take a drosky here at the Kaiserhof. But not to the house. Not even to the street! And don't allow yourself to be cheated and bamboozled by that Mehnerstrasse scamp Tigel-Eden! Count out the things to him piece by piece, and make him give you a receipt—twelve pieces. And be sure to count the pearls and stones. Tell him I'll come and settle with him to-morrow, and he is to shell out the pay in hard cash. Then I can trust you to see to everything?"

"Of course. I am no novice."

They had risen from the bench and walked on slowly to the Kaiserhof, side by side.

"When will you be through with Tigel-Eden, in Mehnerstrasse?"

"I do not know. Is he awake, do you think?"

"Yes. I have notified him that something is up. The house is open."

"How late is it?"

"It is just striking the half-hour. Half-past one."

"Between half-past two and three I'll be at home."

"Well, then, I'll be with you from half-past two. The simplest thing is for me to ride a piece with you. I'll drink one more glass of grog at Alexander Square. I am wet to the skin."

They got into a drosky and drove off in the direction of Alexander Square.

The stolen goods were already on their way to the receiver when the servants assembled in the hall to try and catch the thief.

CHAPTER IX.

AT KROLL'S.

FEELING most painfully his enforced inactivity, and having been compelled to make a retreat that in his eyes, in spite of its recognized necessity, bore a disagreeable resemblance to a disgraceful flight, Prince Ulrich had stepped into Königgrätzerstrasse. He had again turned up the high fur collar which perfectly concealed his face. He looked around; nobody was in sight. But here came a drosky, and it seemed to be empty. He went to meet it.

Ulrich had not caught sight of a single human being save the drosky-driver, and yet there was somebody in the neighborhood who had observed without recognizing him.

On the other side of Königgrätzerstrasse, under the trees, there was going along quite in the dark, with body bent forward, and closing his eyes to protect them from the wind, a strikingly tall, lean, lank figure, wrapped in a long overcoat that flapped about his thin legs. When this person saw a gentleman clad in fur and wearing a beaver emerge from the park-gate at this unusual hour, and shut it to after him, he stopped for a second in amazement.

"Who can that be coming so late from Iseneck's?" he queried to himself.

The thin, narrow-chested man went, like the prince, in the direction of the Brandenburger Thor. He had hailed the drosky. The coachman stopped.

Meanwhile the prince, who had as yet neither seen nor heard anything of the other wayfarer, had reached the drosky, and, while the thin man, who had to cross the carriage-drive, approached from the left, Ulrich had got in from the right.

"To Kroll's!" he exclaimed to the coachman.

The latter wanted to make a remark.

The prince, though, cut him off short with the words: "Drive on! Quick! You'll get ten marks!"

This took effect. The coachman whipped up his horses, which trotted off as briskly as the snow-covered road would allow.

The lean man was furious at this.

"Halt!" he yelled after the coachman. "I called you first! Your number!"

The coachman pretended to be deaf, and drove on. Injured as to his rights, the blood rushed into the man's face, so fierce was his rage. The long-legged fellow ran bounding behind the carriage in order to catch a sight of the number. Soon he caught up with it, and the number was such a striking one that it easily impressed itself on his memory—No. 1,111.

"Just wait, you!" he shouted, angrily, after the coachman. "I'll make you pay for this!"

He was all out of breath from running, and, panting, he hurled out between his teeth muttered curses upon the unmannerly rascal.

"No. 1,111," he repeated.

The coachman had gone on his way in perfect tranquillity of soul.

Ulrich had not troubled himself about the fracas outside of the carriage. As he sat there in that badly ventilated, confined space, and stared before him with furrowed brows, the scenes recently witnessed passed in review before him, and he thought of their possible consequences, he made it out clearly that it was imaginable how some unknown, incalculable, accidental circumstance might bring him into some sort of connection with these occurrences, and then how that which Countess Juliane strove after above everything, and which now must be his most earnest endeavor, too, in that unhappy lady's interest, might be thwarted. He pulled out his watch, and made a light with a lucifer match—one minute before half-past one. Ten minutes before one—he remembered this exactly—he had left Baron von Heddersdorf's ball in company with Director Hillstadt. He had spent at least ten minutes up to the moment when he had met the Countess von Iseneck, and since he had left her a few minutes had again elapsed. All those exciting scenes in the palace—that painful explanation with the countess, the perception of the robbery, the contention with her, she wanting him to be off and he wanting to stay, the precautions taken for her defense—all this had occupied only the brief space of about five-and-twenty minutes. These five-and-twenty minutes must be accounted for without difficulty; proof for their having been spent in a harmless manner might certainly be brought forward, and an alibi proved.

Without making it really clear to himself, only in the indeterminate feeling that it might be useful to him under some circumstances, the prince set his watch back twenty-five minutes just as the carriage drove up before Kroll's, and the bright light of the

lamps at the entrance poured in. It had pointed to five minutes over half-past one. He put it at ten minutes after one.

He got out and gave the promised gold piece to the coachman:

"Thank you kindly, count!" said he.

The coachman had his regular stand in Schadowstrasse, and knew almost all the members of the club, and the residences of many of them as well. Without subtler distinctions, he gave to all frequenters of the club the title of "count." He had often driven the prince before.

Ulrich went once through the hall. The tolerably dull company had no charms whatever for him; he wanted to look around after his friends. He saw some familiar faces in a box above, and going up-stairs entered it. He was greeted with a loud outburst of joy.

"Here you are actually!" exclaimed a friend of former days, Fräulein Franzi, a dancer at the Royal Opera-House. "The Legation"—so was the Councilor von Berwitz usually styled in this society—"had already announced your coming, your Highness, but it was so late that we began to despair."

"So late!" repeated Ulrich. He looked at his watch. "A quarter-past one—hardly. In former times we did not consider that to be a late hour! Have we got to be so very sober, Fräulein Franzi?"

"Truly! Just a quarter-past one!" asseverated Franzi, as she, too, looked at the prince's watch. "Well, you see time dragged with me because I was longing so to see your Highness. Ah! what a lovely little watch you have—always something original!"

It was a cheap English watch, which the prince wore without a chain, with a thick cut-glass case, through which all the wheel-works could be seen.

"Do you like it, Fräulein Franzi? Then, please kindly accept it as a memento of our meeting again."

"Oh, no, your Highness!" said Franzi, with affected backwardness. She had already taken the watch and pressed it to her ear in order to listen to its ticking. "I can not, indeed! You make me really blush for shame."

"No, no," smiled Minnie, who had just taken her wine-glass from her lips, and had been an observer of the scene.

"You may accept it without any scruples. Do not overestimate

it! In order to regulate somewhat the measure of your gratitude, let me draw your attention to the fact that I bought this watch years ago in London for a few shillings. But it goes well!"

"Then I accept it most gratefully, your Highness. I shall keep and prize it as a memento of one of the most fascinating and gallant of men!"

"Had we really got so far again?" now called out, somewhat pettishly, Herr Oscar Bössow, an amiable young clubmate of the prince. "Franzi, don't take it ill of me, but you are unbearable with your—how shall I call it?—with your talent for having things given to you."

"We call her in the green-room the 'paper-basket,' because she picks up everything," laughed the slender Minnie, throwing herself back on her chair and blowing the smoke of her cigarette in a straight direction.

"'Rattlesnake' is not a very pretty name for one who is thin," retorted Franzi, flushing from irritation.

"But, ladies!" again interposed Bössow. "How says the classic in Suppé's 'Boccaccio': '*Noblesse oblige!*' Keep your tempers! And, to speak seriously, Franzi, do get out of that way of spelling for presents on your birthdays and at other times by your eloquence in praising articles belonging to strangers. Really, it is not pretty!"

"There, your Highness! Take the watch!" said Franzi, mortally offended. "Please take it, your Highness! They have spoiled all my pleasure in it."

"Oh, do not mind them, Franzi! Do not be made uncomfortable," said Minnie, soothingly. "Bössow will give you a much prettier one to-morrow."

"I do not care a straw for Herr Bössow's watches," pouted Franzi, whom the champagne had disposed to be somewhat quarrelsome. "He may keep his old watches for himself, and in general."

Bössow and the rest exerted themselves to bring Franzi to a more placable temper, who had evidently taken the accusation too seriously—and they succeeded, too.

After a while Franzi again approached the prince, who had meanwhile been conversing with Dörenborn, Berwitz, Pagger, and others, and whispered in his ear, quite close—so close, that in speaking, her lips lightly touched the muscles of his ear:

"It is pure jealousy! You understand! Give me the watch back again; but secretly, so that the others may not see. You are the best of the whole company."

Ulrich nodded at her approvingly.

The hilarity that prevailed in the box was almost boisterous, and a great deal of wine was drunk. Ulrich had difficulty in controlling his absence of mind and in concealing the deeply serious thoughts that were racking his brain. He thought incessantly of Juliane, and in feverish excitement he saw the further development of the affair, imagining what had happened after he left the scene of action. As to her personal security he might assuredly be perfectly easy, but he coveted certainty on that point. He had kept the watch in his hand all this time, and while he apparently played with it unperceived he set it forward twenty-five minutes, so that the hands again indicated the hour correctly. Try as he would, it was impossible for him to join in the general gayety, and several remarked upon his being so silent.

Ulrich yawned.

"I am tired from my journey; I sleep with open eyes," he explained, negligently. "I shall have to slip away soon. I do not want to impose my stupidity upon the company."

They conversed with him. Franzi handed him a full glass, after having first sipped from its rim herself. The prince stayed, and the merry girls saw to it that the cheerfulness of the occasion was not dimmed.

But all of a sudden it seemed as if an icy breath had chilled the ardor of all, laughter ceasing as by common consent.

A gentleman of striking exterior entered. He was very tall, narrow shouldered, spindle-shanked; his decidedly elegant clothes, evidently made by a good tailor, hung loose about his bony limbs. His hair was thin on the crown and cropped quite short, and was crow-black, like his uncommonly large mustache, that was turned up fiercely at the ends, and waxed very stiff. His complexion was very dark, his skin coarse and thick like untanned leather. He had medium-sized, shining black eyes, and a bold eagle nose. He reminded one involuntarily of Don Quixote, that knight of the rueful visage.

This gentleman paid his respects to the assembled company, and his salutation was evidently responded to with reserve. Prince Ulrich turned off, whether with or without design, none could say.

He leaned over the railing, and looked down upon the dancers in the hall.

The unsociable stillness in the box and the prince's demeanor left no doubt as to the feeling with which he was received upon the mind of the new-comer. This was hardly a novel experience for him, however. His chief object was to be seen by others in conversation with Prince Ulrich von Engernheim, as he sat in that box. This was more than usually desirable for him to-night, for to-morrow was to be an important day for him, and possibly it might be valuable to him to be able to remark incidentally "that yesterday he had met Prince Engernheim," and in social chat he had said so and so.

For this reason, he now stepped forward, and said :

"My bow was meant for you, too, my prince !"

Ulrich slowly turned to the tall man, and measuring him from head to foot, with an expression of unconcealed contempt, replied, with frigid composure :

"If you are satisfied with my mode of returning it, then I have no objection to make to your satisfaction."

"And supposing I am not satisfied with it ?"

"Then you must seek indemnity elsewhere. You must perceive by this time that I have no desire to carry on a conversation with you."

"Then we shall talk together elsewhere."

"I hardly deem that likely," were the words with which Prince Ulrich closed the conversation, while again he turned his back upon him and looked down upon the dancing in the hall below.

Quivering with passion, the tall man stepped back and left the box without a parting salutation.

The man thus treated came of one of the most noble and distinguished families in the land, very many members of which had occupied the most prominent positions, both in the army and civil service. It was Baron Emmerich von Saza, a degenerate scion of a noble stock, the shame of his race. He was also a near relation of the Wikings, therefore of Countess Juliane also ; and that was the reason why he had noticed so particularly that somebody had come out of the Iseneck park at so late an hour, and he would have given a great deal if he had recognized the gentleman who had taken the drosky away from him before his face. Fortunately, this was not the case.

Prince Ulrich von Engernheim and Baron von Saza had neither of them any suspicion that they had already come in contact just a short while before.

Saza had been compelled to leave town several years before in consequence of some disgraceful action. At the same time had been withdrawn from him the last moral restraint. He had sunk lower and lower, and his honorable family, who had had to suffer severely from such a reprobate bearing their proud name, had disowned him. He had bartered this proud name in a revolting manner; he had become lawfully united with a person owning quite a large fortune, but notorious throughout the city for a disreputable past, and actually consented to receive a considerable sum of money from her for the title of baroness. After one year of wedlock the baroness, who had found this husband too expensive a luxury, and had plenty of cause of complaint against him, succeeded in obtaining a divorce.

During the brief period of his marriage, Bertha Schmider—now in the Countess Iseneck's service—had been waiting-maid for the Baroness von Saza. The baron had made attempts to fascinate the girl, who at that time was very pretty and young, without, however, accomplishing his purpose. Bertha had given up her place, and been discreet enough not to betray to the baroness the true cause of her quitting so suddenly.

Saza was a spendthrift. The money saved from the shipwreck of his marriage was soon spent. His desires remained the same, while his means for gratifying them were exhausted. He sought after new resources, and sought them in the domain to which his evil instincts had banished him.

For sorry newspapers that hoped to rise on the wings of scandal, he wrote malicious, sensational articles relating to persons of his own rank whose private histories he happened to know intimately; and these vile slanders made their impression. The pecuniary returns, however, were not satisfactory; at all events, they did not bring in as much money as Saza required.

But he had now gained experience in the ways of those mole-like existences of that great city which make their living by burrowing underground and nibbling at roots. In association with this obscure brotherhood, Baron Emmerich von Saza, on account of the pure ring of his name and his blood-relationship to the highest dignitaries was treated with distinction.

In this circle he had also made the acquaintance of an unchanged cut-throat, a certain William Sparber, who had hitherto carried on a peculiar sort of business in loans upon his own account, and who was not disinclined to take the baron into partnership. For his particular business a noble name was of importance. There was value for him too, in being able to work in conjunction with a man who was perfectly conversant with what was going on in high circles, could unwind the tangled skein of aristocratical connections, and was perfectly familiar with the persons of those moving in the best society, as well as with the forms prevalent there. Through his own boorish awkwardness he had often failed in his enterprises, suffering many a loss by over or under estimating the nicer points of a situation, and for the same reason had to forego many a chance for money-making.

The partnership was formed, and the firm of "Sparber and Von Saza, commissioners and negotiators of loans," was entered upon the registry of trade.

On all Sundays and holidays appeared the following advertisement in the most widely read journals of the city:

"Doubtful claims are bought up. Note that the liquidation of these claims is undertaken without the giver of the commission being put to any expense; draughts on landed estate, as well as those of merchants and officers, discounted by Sparber and Von Saza."

Saza's special share in this pretty business was to urge up tardy debtors through the uneasiness of relations. With virtuoso-like skill he had carried on his trade without ever falling into the traps of the paragraphists who laid bare schemes of extortion, studying that corner of the papers very closely, with the aid of all the commentaries.

Often already had Saza been grossly insulted by his equals in rank, for he no longer made any secret of his disgraceful traffic, and the insult had been intensified by the judicial prohibition forbidding a gentleman to fight with him. But Saza, who had long since lost all sense of shame, still had the incredible audacity to force himself upon his former associates, who had thrust him out of their midst. He did this, by preference, in presence of as many spectators as possible—in the theatre, for instance, at public balls, or in public gardens, etc.; and, ill as it usually fared with him, he renewed the experiment again and again. It was a business necessity with him to keep up the illusion that he still belonged to the

society in which the accident of birth had placed him. And there were actually still a few ignorant and simple people who let him deceive them. In his mortifying exclusion from polite circles, there was present with him now a personal necessity for parading his aristocratic acquaintances.

This pressure had drawn him into the box where he had met with deserved contempt.

"I agree entirely with you," said the young commonwealth's attorney, Von Dürenborn, to Prince Ulrich, after Saza had withdrawn, "that you will hardly find opportunity, in the near future, to converse much with that pleasant gentleman. And when I say this I do not at all allude to your personal repugnance, which we all know how to understand; but, apart from this, that bullying firm of Sparber and Von Saza, who have hitherto, with noteworthy dexterity, steered clear of those unpleasantly compromising paragraphs of the penal code, have finally become liable to punishment under the statute contained in paragraph 266, and are suspended on *Alinea 2*."

"What paragraph is that?" asked Minnie.

"It is the paragraph which inculcates the untrue, young lady," explained the commonwealth's attorney, with comical dignity.

"You don't tell us so!" exclaimed both the ballet-dancers, simultaneously.

"Yes, ladies, there is a breach of good faith which renders one liable, under our law, to imprisonment, loss of civil rights, and a fine to the extent of three thousand marks. But make yourselves easy, ladies; it is a breach of good faith, but not yours."

"Nothing further was lacking!" exclaimed Franzi. "Three thousand marks!" The degree of the punishment made an impression upon her.

"And, in this particular case," continued Dürenborn, turning to the gentlemen, "the question relates to wrong done to an employer, who had put full trust in this firm. I have the matter in hand, and things must go oddly awry if the gentleman escapes me. I purposely kept somewhat in the background, and hope that Saza did not see me. The case comes up to-morrow. I shall propose immediate incarceration as soon as the very probable condemnation is pronounced, on account of the obvious danger of flight; and I have the impression that Saza—at least for the next few months—will be somewhat circumscribed in his movements."

"Will he be chained?" queried Minnie.

This episode was speedily forgotten, and yet jollity would not return to the group.

Ulrich was out of sorts. He was uneasy as to the fate of the countess. Possibly he could learn something more even to-night. Under the repeated pretext of having been overwheeled by his journey, he got up, after a little while, in order to take leave. The rest, too, prepared to leave. He pressed Franz's hand, and took advantage of the opportunity to slip the watch into her fingers, without attracting any one's attention.

Councilor of Legation Von Berwitz joined the prince. It was shortly after half-past two when they came out upon Königsplatz. The others followed a few minutes afterward.

CHAPTER X.

SIFTING THE CASE.

COUNTESS JULIANE was aroused from her fainting-fit by a gentle, it is true, but persistent knocking at the door which led from the hall into the park chamber. With difficulty she had collected her faculties and dragged herself as far as the door.

"Will my gracious lady be so good as to open the door?" exclaimed the *portier* Peterberg. "We are all in place, ma'am."

A queer spectacle was presented by all the men and women who had collected together in the front hall, and now entered the room of their mistress in obedience to her summons. Some of them appeared with sticks, others with pistols, and yet others with candles and lamps, all, however, in such undress as the eye of the countess had never rested upon; the *portier* and his wife, the coachman and stable-boy, Hotte and Bob, the cook and her scullion, Bertha and the two house-maids—all save the gardener, who, with his family and his assistants, were still tranquilly snoozing in their snow-wrapped cottage. Nero, out of his emerald-green eyes, looked with suspicious astonishment upon these intruders. Suddenly he barked again, gnashed his teeth, planted his hind legs far apart, and made ready for a leap, so that Hotte, who knew the creature better than anybody else, turned pale and jumped aside, spreading consternation around him, as he shrieked out, in wild alarm:

"For God's sake, hold the dog, countess!"

The countess gave the dog a light tap and called out imperiously: "Down, sir!" and the strong animal crouched at her feet snarling.

The countess said, in a few words, that somebody had broken into her dressing-room. The coachman Drenkman and the *portier* Peterberg, followed by Hotte, entered, after they had drawn back the bolt.

They soon returned to the countess.

They reported that the candle was burning, the strong chest was pushed back and revealed two large, round holes; two jewel-cases lay open on the ground.

"We must set guards at the gates so that the thieves may not escape, if they are still in the house. We shall surely catch them! How can they have got away? It will be time enough to-morrow morning to go for the police. Then the countess, who has gone through so much excitement, may have a few hours to rest; else, if we have the police here in the house all night long the countess would be disturbed and get not one bit of sleep."

"Go directly to the nearest police station and tell them what has happened."

"If you will let me, gracious countess, I'll run," offered Bob, who had only his cap to put on, while Hotte, who had slipped on his trousers and jacket in a hurry, and stuck his feet into dressing-room slippers, would have required more time to get ready to go out.

"Make haste!"

Again the whole crowd repaired to the front hall and awaited the arrival of Bob and the detectives, discussing eagerly, meanwhile, the event of the hour. The countess lay utterly exhausted in her reclining-chair and shut her eyes. Nero stood by her side.

Bob's announcement put the chief watchman and his men in a great state of excitement. His Excellency Count von Iseneck, one of the highest Government officers, had been robbed, and, according to the servant's account, some very rare valuables were among the articles stolen. The case appeared to the head watchman too important to manage upon his own responsibility; he rather felt himself bound to arouse the lieutenant of police. The latter, too, attached the fullest significance to the affair. All the bureaux were immediately notified of the robbery through circular dispatches.

Besides that, he immediately sent a dispatch to the central bureau and hunted up the ever-vigilant commissary of the criminal court, begging him to repair, by the shortest possible course, to the palace of Count von Iseneck in Wilhelmstrasse.

After he had left other instructions for his district in case of certain emergencies, he proceeded to the palace, accompanied by the head watchman and several guardsmen.

He got the Countess von Iseneck to relate to him the circumstances, as they appeared to her, the time when she first took the alarm, when the dog barked, the singular sounds heard, etc., and then requested the countess to conduct him to her dressing-room ; at the same time he addressed the request to the noble lady that she would have the whole palace illuminated, especially the basement.

"Have you any suspicion of any of your own people, your Excellency ?" asked he.

"Not the slightest."

"But the circumstances indicate that the robbery was practiced by some one belonging to your own household. The thief or thieves must have been aware that his Excellency the count was away on a journey ; they must have been well acquainted with the premises. And if it had been a stranger the dog could not have been quieted, even by your Excellency. We shall inspect the house very closely after a while ; we shall certainly find their traces. What has been stolen is either now in the house, or we shall find in what way it has been put out. At all events, we shall keep a sharp eye upon your people. Are you sure of the *portier*, your Excellency ?"

"Perfectly sure. He has been in my husband's service for thirty years ; he is as true as steel."

"If you would, first of all, have the goodness to open the press and ascertain what has been stolen."

While the lieutenant surveyed the great openings with a certain professional admiration, he said : "That is a perfect work of art ! The persons who did that were not at their first job of house-breaking."

When the countess had opened the front door of the press, she turned ashen gray ; horror paralyzed her, she tottered, and the officer had to spring forward to keep her from falling.

The "Lamoral" was missing !

What that signified, she now pictured to herself, for the first

time—and no one beside herself and one other person, nobody else in the whole wide world could suspect what had been stolen!

"My lace is missing," said she, after she had collected her faculties. "It is an irreparable loss."

"How high do you estimate its value?"

"It is inestimable!"

"Old lace, then?"

"Yes!" The countess corrected herself, "No, the imitation of an old pattern, but just as beautiful as the original. Inestimable!"

"Now, noble lady, laces are hard to sell, particularly when they are rare and costly. We could get them back very easily if they attempted to get rid of them."

"I will pay any price to whomsoever will get them back for me; twenty thousand marks—the double of it."

"Now, now!" said the detective, soothingly. "We need not go so high. We can go far with a reward of a thousand marks."

"I'll pay any sum!" repeated Julianne.

In the consciousness of this overwhelming disaster Julianne seemed regardless of everything beside.

Her pearls had been stolen, her beautiful, lustrous pearls, as Julianne immediately perceived, the same which she had worn this wretched night! She was accustomed, upon returning home from an evening party, to lay all her jewels and the pretty things that she had worn in the lower drawer of the press, and not to arrange them in their proper receptacles until the next morning. Had she taken the precaution to lay her valuable ornaments in their cases the pearls would have been safe from the robbers' hands. For the case, with its peculiar lock, destined especially to hold the complete set of pearls, diadem, necklace, and bracelet, was much too large to admit of its being dragged through the round opening in the back plate. And the "Lamoral," too, would have been safe in its silver-bound leather case. Involuntarily the tears stood in Julianne's eyes when the police-officer called her attention to this, and showed her the scratches upon another case that concealed her costly set of rubies, showing that it had defied the attacks of the robbers.

From the upper part of the press, which was locked up securely, there had disappeared a diamond aigrette, a necklace, and a bracelet of sapphires, which unfortunately had smaller cases. The thieves

had rifled of their contents and thrown on the floor the emptied caskets.

Then the countess missed different rings, among them a costly solitaire and a rose pearl of high value.

The countess declared that, for the moment, she was in no condition to make more exact estimates. The next morning, after she had recovered her strength a little, she would make a full inventory.

Even now the countess's communications were sufficient to show that, apart from the lace, declared to be inestimable, the robbery had been an uncommonly considerable one. The stolen property represented a value of a hundred thousand marks.

The lieutenant of police was still busied with the taking down of the facts of the case when Commissary Beyer—who had been telegraphed for—entered, followed by several of his deputies. In this time of trouble, it was fortunate that Commissary Beyer was the officer in charge for the night, accomplished detective as he was. Beyer, a tall, slender man, with keen eyes, a sensitive nose, and a broad chin, with strong cheek-bones, looked not unlike a bird of prey.

After reverentially introducing himself to the countess, he got his colleagues to report to him, and in every essential point shared the impressions that they had imbibed, and entirely approved of the measures already taken by the lieutenant of police.

When he had investigated the scene of the deed, and learned what he wanted to learn, he turned to the countess.

"Your Excellency, if we would accomplish anything not a moment is to be lost. Any minute may be used for the veiling of the facts of the case, and every minute makes successful investigation more difficult. Your Excellency, then, must support us with all your might. I see how dreadfully the affair has affected you, but there is no help for it. To-morrow, perhaps, will be too late. Then let me beseech your Excellency most urgently and humbly to tell everything relating to the matter."

"I had returned home from the ball, and had myself undressed by my maid—"

"What is the girl's name?"

"Bertha Schmider—and, as usual, locked up the lace, which had been ripped off my dress, with the pearls, in the iron press."

"That was about what time?"

"About a quarter to one. I sent the girl away. I had a head-

ache, and stayed awake. When I was about to retire, I led the dog, who is very watchful, strong, and trusty, to his bed in front of the press, as I usually do. I stayed up some time longer, then I suddenly heard the dog bark out loud."

"When was that?"

"I can not exactly say. A little after one, I think—may be a quarter-past one. I thought that the dog, who is very fond of me, wanted to get to me, and I called to him through the arras-door, bidding him keep quiet and lie down. The dog usually obeys me promptly and blindly. Now, however, he snarled angrily, continued to bark, and was not to be quieted. Suddenly I heard a peculiar sound, a scraping or scratching on metal, and then a crash. I realized the state of the case at once, and, being alone, was terrified. That the dog would protect me I knew, and then, gathering up all my courage, I opened the arras-door and called to the dog, who forthwith bounded forward to protect me. Then I barricaded myself in and rang for the servants."

"As well as you can judge, how long were the thieves at work? I mean, how much time elapsed between the first barking of the dog and all becoming quiet again?"

"Perhaps twenty minutes, I think."

"Twenty minutes! And you are sure that you are not mistaken? Why, hours must have been spent in doing that!"

"By no means! Twice, shortly before, I had been in the room with Nero. If anybody had been hidden there Nero would have torn him to pieces. And had I not so peremptorily ordered the dog to keep still the thief would have been found a throttled corpse."

"Now, your Excellency, for such artistic boring as that many hours are requisite. Everything, then, was prepared beforehand for to-night's job. Its perpetrator or his accomplice is certainly of the household. Have you noticed anything peculiar about one or another? Any signs of uneasiness? Has any one lately left your service, or have you dismissed anybody?"

"My maid has given me warning that she must leave me at Easter, Bertha—"

"Ah!" came from the commissary, and he nodded his head.

"She expects to be married to Johann Hotte, the butler."

"Is that so! I believe we need look no further. I would like to have all the servants summoned here, madame, if you have no objection."

"You have my leave."

The servants all filed in. The master of the watch reported that nothing at all striking had been found in any of the rooms in the basement.

"Is nobody missing? You, *portier*, look carefully, and tell me if all are here?"

"Nobody is absent!" affirmed Peterberg after a while.

"Well, then," began the commissary, "you all know that this house was broken into about an hour ago. The knave is among you. Be quiet!" thundered he, as a movement of indignation made itself apparent. "The villain is among you! We have the proofs already. I shall now examine you one after the other. If any of this honorable company has anything to say, let him come forward and speak for himself. I'll begin with the butler."

Johann stepped forward.

"What is your name?"

"Johann Hotte."

"How long have you been in his Excellency's service?"

"For three years."

"What were you before then?"

"A soldier."

"I see you have on the iron cross."

"As you say, sir."

"What were you before you became a soldier?"

Hotte controlled himself to admiration, for he felt that his answer was important.

"A mechanic," said he.

"Ah, indeed! A locksmith, let's say. Have you been alone in the palace lately, or nearly alone?"

"No."

"Yes you were, though!" interposed the *portier* *frau*. "Last summer, when the master and mistress left home, you were put in charge of the palace."

"I was not alone, though."

"That I can well imagine. Make no evasions, mind! Do not stop us here," said the commissary, with some irritation. "Were you out at all this evening?" said he, going on with his queries.

"No." The *portier*, the coachman, and Bob all made a movement of dissent. Hotte corrected himself: "Oh, yes, I went to the Christmas market."

"When was that?"

"From ten till about eleven."

"What did you do there?"

"I bought a good many little things for my girl, for the coachman, and the *portier's* children."

"Then, where are the things?"

"I have already given Drenkman and Peterberg theirs."

"How about the presents for your girl?"

"They'll be sent to me to-morrow morning."

"We shall see! And now I'll tell you something, fellow. Do you know what I believe? You are the thief, or at least his abettor!"

"But, Mr. Commissary, how can you dare thus to accuse a knight of the iron cross—"

"It is bad enough if you bring shame upon that badge of merit. Now be silent and wait until you are questioned. I tell you to your face, you did it, or at least were present when it was done. In summer you prepared everything—too well, and that is your stupidity—and this evening you went out and fetched your gallows-bird of a friend, whom we shall soon catch, too. The dog knows them better than anybody in the house. So you did the job! Chief watchman, have this fellow's room thoroughly searched once more, doors and windows included."

"It shall be as you say, sir."

"We'll take him into custody by and by. Bertha Schmider, Come here!"

Bertha obeyed the commissary's dictate with shaking limbs.

"Are you engaged to Hotte?"

"Yes, sir, but verily and truly—"

"Only be still! It profits you nothing. You must be off with us, too."

Bertha uttered a piercing shriek.

"Be quiet, I tell you! I make no charge against you. If you have had nothing to do with the affair you may go scot free to-morrow morning. But to-night you must stay with us. There, no shrieking and howling are going to help you. Be reasonable, or else I'll have you marched off to jail at once."

Bertha dropped into a chair, sobbing, and whimpered incessantly.

The examination of the rest of the servants did not elicit the

least ground of suspecting any of them to have been engaged in the plot. The head watchman, indeed, announced that clear tracks had been left in the snow, which proved incontestably that the window in Hotte's room on Wilhelmstrasse, as well as the opposite one, in Bertha's room, had been opened, and that somebody had been moving about in front of the windows. Bertha's window, to be sure, had been opened and closed earlier than that of Hotte.

By the opening of the window-blinds the snow had been displaced. The spot below Bertha's window, where the snow had been brushed away, had been again snowed over, and the foot-prints in the street, too, had nearly disappeared under a fresh fall of snow, although they were still to be recognized. Before Hotte's window, on the other hand, the place cleared, in the form of a segment, retained its shape perfectly, and the prints of feet on the street were distinct. The man who had stood there had evidently been there after the snow-storm was entirely over, and the commissary, hence, was certain that it had been shortly after one o'clock. This agreed, then, precisely with the recognized hour of the burglary.

Hotte being again brought forward gave an evasive answer. He opened his window every night; he hadn't noticed anybody on the street. He could make no reply, upon the commissary's objecting that he had gone to bed before midnight, and that the window had not been opened until after one o'clock.

After the establishing of these important facts, it occurred to the commissary that the snow might possibly make other important revelations. He ordered the metallic jalousies to be drawn up, and had the double wooden door unclosed that opened upon the park. He took the light out of the tapestried chamber. Then he cast a penetrating glance upon the parlor carpet. And there were tracks—unmistakable foot-prints!

"Here, again, we take a great step in advance!" exclaimed he, joyfully.

Close to the entrance from the park was a large, damp spot, that felt cold. And upon closer inspection, little flakes of unmelted snow were perceptible.

On the Steinway piano, in closest proximity, were considerable traces of water on its water-proof cover—here a round dab in larger and smaller globules, and not far off a larger splash of irregular shape, much as if some one had overturned there a tumbler half full of water.

"There the thief threw off his hat and wet overcoat! And here, at the entrance, he shook off the snow-flakes from his boots. That is clear! And there! There we have distinct tracks in the snow. Those tracks in the park! Quite distinct!" The commissary had raised the lamp in his hand, and peered through the panes of glass. "Let nobody go into the park. We must examine into this narrowly."

"You see, Mr. Commissary, that it can not have been me," cried Hotte.

"You will wait until a question is asked you," said the commissary, sternly. The contemptuous tone that he used in addressing him infuriated the man-servant. The commissary here made a pause, stroked his broad chin, and then said, turning to Juliane:

"One thing does not harmonize. Pardon me, noble lady. You said that you did not leave the park chamber again after dismissing your maid. But that is not possible, else you must have seen the man, your Excellency. The fellow was in there, there is no mistake about it. He came from yonder," added he, pointing to the right-hand window. "Here," pointing to the moist place on the carpet by the glass door, "he shook the snow off his boots," pointing to the piano, "and there he laid his hat and overcoat, and," pointing straight out of the door, "thence made his escape. Please reflect, your Excellency."

Juliane was so utterly unstrung that she could hardly frame an answer. Meanwhile, the commissary succeeded, by dint of judicious questioning, in gaining the information that the countess had certainly left the park chamber twice, even if only for a short while; and the sharp-witted official now constructed, from the material in hand, a theory as to the course of events, such as they very probably were, as follows:

There were at least two engaged in the crime, probably three—doubtless, Hotte, who had for a confederate the person who had joined him from the park. A third person, at all events, had had some collusion with the perpetrators of the deed from Wilhelmstrasse. Of this third party nothing positive was known as yet.

Hotte had undoubtedly slipped into the room, and was waiting for the appointed moment. His accomplice, who had got into the park by means of a master-key, had reached the palace by a side-path, taking his stand, favored by darkness, in front of the lighted windows; thence he had watched the proceedings in the park

chamber, and the very moment that he saw the countess disappear in the adjoining room, whither she had gone to mix a powder, he had profited by her absence to glide through the unlocked door into the room. That he should have taken off his hat and overcoat, and shaken the snow from his boots, was indeed singular, but the experienced policeman knew that in every crime incomprehensible things occur. This, then, did not at all bewilder him in his conjectures. The park chamber had been only partially lighted, by the countess's own statement. It was very probable, then, that the hat and overcoat might not have been noticed by her lying in the dimly lighted entrance as they did. Apparently Hotte had undertaken the task of keeping the dog quiet, while the other had carried out the plan of robbery, which had been so long on hand, And this had been made so much easier for him by the countess rendering him unconscious aid when she kept ordering the faithful creature to lie down and be still. Afterward, when the lady herself had called off the dog, and hurried with him into the next room in order to bolt the doors there, the intruder had slipped out of the dressing-room, had taken his things off the piano, and made his way straight to the entrance on Königgrätzerstrasse, through the park. The deed had been performed with such celerity and foolhardiness that the commissary could think of only two or three notorious housebreakers as its possible contrivers.

With a few picked men, he went into the park, and had light thrown upon the tracks in the snow.

Suddenly he exclaimed, joyfully: "I have just thought of it! Now I recognize quite clearly the handwriting of my friend Halting Fritz. Look," said he to his comrade, the lieutenant of police, "the foot-prints differ, one foot steps more firmly, and makes a deeper impression than the other; the right foot has left quite a sharp, clean-cut impression in the snow, the lines left by the left foot are longish, irregular, dragging. Now, I know exactly where I stand."

The lieutenant convinced himself of the correctness of these observations.

When they again entered the park chamber, the commissary ordered Hotte up once more.

"Do you know lame Fritz?" asked he, fixing Hotte with his piercing eyes. "A certain Fritz Wildicke—Halting Fritz is his nickname. Do you know this man Wildicke? Now, answer. I ask you if you know a man by the name of Fritz Wildicke?"

Hotte kept silence.

"Perhaps you know him by another name. Do you know a man, about your age, with crisp, black hair and a black mustache, who halts pretty badly in his walk? Think well, now."

"No," answered Hotte.

"Are you sure about what you say? If we find out later that you do know this lame man, and have been often in his company, it will fare badly with you, I am thinking, my lark. Make no joke of it. You stick to it? Do you know nobody answering to my description? A broad-shouldered man, about the same age as yourself, lame, with black, curly hair. Now, do you know Wildicke?"

"No."

While the commissary was asking this last question, the *portier* had begun to give closer attention. He had bent over, inclined his head, and finally held his hand to his ear. At the same time his countenance assumed a very serious, perturbed cast. After Hotte had answered the question in the negative, he gave a start, and then came forward.

"Umph, umph!" ejaculated he. "A man with curly black hair that limps. If Hotte does not know him, Bertha does, and very well, too!"

"Now, Bertha Schmider!" exclaimed the commissary, who had been all this while perfectly indifferent to Bertha's piteous lamentations. "You hear what this man says! What have you to reply to it?"

Bertha covered her eyes and groaned only the more distressingly, instead of making any answer.

"All that I can say, Mr. Commissary, is that a man such as you describe called to see Bertha once last summer," declared Peterberg. "He said that he was her cousin, and had only a few hours to stay between trains."

"Would you recognize him again?" inquired the commissary.

"To be sure I should!" replied Peterberg.

The countess had now become so completely exhausted that a stop had to be put to further investigations, the lady feeling herself necessitated to ask the commissary to send everybody away, and leave her alone. The commissary, who considered his task performed as regarded the main matter, politely took his leave. Bertha was led off, along with Hotte, amid loud howling and whimpering; the rest retired to their rooms. The commissary held a little con-

sultation with the *portier*, and then left the palace, conversing as he went with the lieutenant of police.

The countess had the wax candles put out and the windows opened. The cold night wind blew into the close room and brought a little relief to the poor woman, who lay there, extended upon her reclining chair, as if lifeless, with waxen visage, sunken chest, and arms hanging down limp. The second housemaid, Ida, stood sympathetically by her side, while Nero stretched himself in front of her.

The cold night air streamed in unhindered, and had gradually taken possession of the whole place. After a permission obtained silently, the girl closed the windows and doors, and, proceeding to aid Julianne, whose teeth were now chattering under the influence of a strong chill, in undressing, got her to bed.

Nero crept into a corner. He did not want to disturb his mistress by any unguarded ill-behavior, but neither would he leave her alone. The only lamp left lighted in the chamber was subdued by a crimson shade, which cast a mild glow around, not unlike the parting rays of sunset upon an autumnal evening. Ida sat upon a table in a remote corner of the room, so that the rest of the slumberer, behind her Spanish screen, might not be disturbed by her; and after she had stood a while at the foot of the bed, watching the countess with solicitous looks, and convincing herself that her poor mistress was asleep, she slipped away on tiptoe.

Prince Ulrich and Councilor of Legation von Berwitz took a carriage together and got out in front of the Hotel Royal. Councilor von Berwitz proposed to go the remainder of the short way to his own residence on foot, that being also on Wilhelmstrasse, but beyond Leipzigerstrasse.

"I'll go a little farther with you," said Prince Ulrich; "it is a necessity with me to stretch my legs a little before going to bed."

Verily, it was a necessity for him to pass by the Iseneck palace once more, in some way that would not attract suspicion to himself; he hoped that somehow he would be able to learn something that would put an end to his tormenting anxiety. And his hope was not deceived. The pair sauntered slowly up the silent street, engaged in social chat.

Suddenly, as if by command, they halted and gazed in astonishment, first across the street and then at each other.

"What was that?"

At this late hour, when all around was dark and still, and the always rather faulty street-lamps were performing their duty more unsatisfactorily than ever on account of the snow, which was heaped up high on the upper slides of the lanterns and had stuck to the side glasses, here and there in lumps, there stood the Iseneck palace in a blaze of illumination; light shone from all the windows of the cellar, ground floor, and also the many windows of the upper story; in the wings as well as the main building; so that from all sides light was pouring down upon the snow-covered yard.

Ulrich and Berwitz crossed over the intervening road.

At that instant the great middle door of the cross building opened and an extraordinary procession moved out, crossing the front yard; there was a man in a jacket with a round hat between two guards, the white facings of whose helmets fairly glittered, and behind them a woman, almost fainting, half carried, half dragged between two other guards, and while she was being thus unwillingly transported whimpering and sobbing without intermission. Several other men in civil and police uniform followed.

Berwitz took the initiative.

"We must certainly find out what has happened."

"Of course."

The *portier*, who appeared directly, told the gentlemen exactly the state of the case. The countess had just retired to try and get some rest.

"To-morrow morning assure your mistress of our deep sympathy. We shall call toward midday to ask after the countess's health."

"Do so, your Highness."

The gentlemen agreed—this was Monday—to go together and pay their visit to the countess on the following day. What the *portier* had told them excited them greatly. For a long while they commented upon the unexampled effrontery of the burglars, and were inclined to think that, bad as it was to have lost property, there was cause for congratulation that the crime had stopped there. Under some circumstances one may look out for worse—yes, the very worst. And if that weak little woman had surprised and disturbed them, who knows what they might not have done to put out of the way the sole human witness of their deed! Berwitz warmly regretted that the countess herself had hindered the dog from doing his duty. If Nero could only have caught the rascal by the throat, and

in his unconscious brute force punished him more radically than human wisdom and justice could do, it would have served him right.

Prince Ulrich did not contradict him.

The gentlemen bade each other good-night. The prince returned to his hotel much less oppressed in spirit than he had been before. He passed a pretty quiet night.

The unhappy Juliane, however, tossed to and fro upon her bed, consumed with burning heat. Reality and fevered dreams contended for the mastery of her tortured brain. The horrible recent past and yet more hideous visions of a possible future mingled, and were interwoven into an unbearable something that, in her heated fancy, took the shape of the strangely transformed "Lamoral" lace. Sometimes it was a gag rammed down her throat, again, as a rope, it was flung around her neck, sometimes bound her breast like a tight bandage, and finally was spread like a bier over her stiffened limbs. And she groaned, repeating over and over again the old rhyming legend :

"Dentelle *Lamoral*,
Ecrase la morale.
Puis donne la mortàl,
Adultère fatal"

She kept saying this over all that long, unending December night.

The efforts of the commissary to get Wildicke under arrest before daybreak were fruitless, since, as that officer rightly apprehended, he had not for several days been near the lodgings which had been specified as his when his name had been entered on the city register. Commissary Beyer regretted this very much, because he well knew that by morning there would not be left the slightest clew with Wildicke of the stolen property. As to the seizure of the criminal he gave himself not the least concern, for it was known to him that Halting Fritz hardly let a day pass without spending more or less time in the advanced hours of the night at the Gray Misery. He would be very likely to find him there the following morning, certainly during the next few days, when he would make sure of him without fail.

All the Berlin police force was notified before daybreak to look out sharply for Wildicke, the supposed chief actor in the Iseneck robbery.

CHAPTER XI.

WILL VICTORIOUS.

PRESIDENT COUNT ALBRECHT VON ISENECK was much shocked, upon his arrival at Berlin, early Monday morning, when, in answer to his question why Johann had not come to meet him as usual, he received the answer from Bob that Johann and Bertha, the maid, had both been sent off to prison the night before. He also informed him that the iron press in the countess's dressing-room had been broken into and robbed of many valuables, and that it was upon the charge of having been accessory to this crime that the two servants had been put into custody.

As soon as he reached his palace and had changed his dress, he summoned Peterberg to him—his oldest and most trusty servant—and asked of him an exact account of all that had happened. As the occurrence was perfectly inexplicable to him, also, Peterberg had no intelligence to give. Why had not his express order that Bertha was to sleep in the countess's dressing-room, during his absence, been obeyed? The solution of this enigma he could only expect from his wife, for whom day had not yet dawned, although the tenth hour had already struck. In this circumstance, however, he read fresh proof of the correctness of the admission that nobody could have done the deed save persons attached to the count's service, and familiar with all that went on in the palace. Especially did it bear hard upon Bertha. He directed that word should be brought him as soon as the countess could speak with him, and that his arrival should be announced to her as speedily as possible. After the interval of an hour he was informed that his wife would like to speak to him.

Count Albrecht turned pale and started back when his eyes fell upon Juliane. With Ida's dexterous assistance she had made her toilet in bed, since she had felt too weak to leave her couch. The icy, cold December air streamed in through the windows and park door, which had been opened wide at her request. She sat upright in bed with her thin lace dressing-sack thrown around her, and with her back propped against many pillows. Her magnificent hair fell in shining ringlets over the white pillows and veiled her breast; and

out of this waving mass looked a face strangely flushed, and with a distorted expression.

No, it was no illusion !

In the middle of her head and on both sides, especially marked in the middle where the hair was parted, her beautiful blue-black hair was seamed with silver threads, and her rich dark curls showed the same admixture. Juliane had grown gray in a night !

The expression of her countenance had altered more through this circumstance than through the wasting effects of a fever.

At last Count Albrecht recovered his self-possession. He cautiously approached the couch, and held out his hand to his wife.

"You seem to be suffering a great deal, my dear !" said he, in a low, subdued voice. "Have you sent for the doctor ?"

Juliane said no, by a languid movement of her head.

"I shall fetch him myself. We had better not talk just now of the thing that has made you ill. I think it is better so ; it would only excite you uselessly, and I know all that I need to know. Allow me to ask just this one question, 'Did Bertha go to her own room, contrary to my orders, of her own accord, or did you send her there ?'"

"I sent her to the front of the house. She disturbed me by her outcries in her sleep."

"Ah, that indeed ! Is there anything in particular that I can get for you ?"

Juliane declined his offer by the same languid movement of the head.

"I would advise you to have the windows closed. It is freezing cold here !"

Juliane closed her eyelids in token of acquiescence. Then she said, with a melancholy smile : "Cold ! and I am consumed by intolerable heat."

"You have a fever ; I feel it by your hot, dry hand. If Dr. Lo-hausen has no objection to make, you can open the windows again after a while. You would do well to admit no visitors before you have consulted the doctor."

Juliane again acquiesced, making, however, one exception :

"Only Alix, who was to come and see me to-day. I should like to see her."

"As you choose ; but don't get excited, Juliane."

"Nobody else—not a creature! They are not even to let me know when people call."

"I shall give the necessary directions. You are to be left entirely undisturbed."

"Berwitz and Ulrich Engernheim learned last night—I do not know how—of what had happened here. They sent word that they meant to pay a visit of condolence. I will not see them, either. Nobody!"

"Your rest shall not be disturbed. Depend upon that."

Juliane shut her eyes, and let her head fall back. The few words that she had heard and said had exhausted her feeble powers. The count kissed her hand, and left the room on tiptoe. After he had given orders that the countess's wishes should be carried out to the letter, he went in his carriage for Dr. Lohausen.

Hardly had Count Iseneck left the palace before the Princess Alix entered, followed by her servant. She had dressed in haste, for very early in the morning her papa had received the following note from Prince Ulrich:

"MY DEAR PRINCE:

"Through an accident, Berwitz and I went home through Wilhelmstrasse, and thus learned that the house of your niece Iseneck had been broken into and robbed. Count von Iseneck is expected home to-day. Perhaps the countess may need your counsel and assistance ere that time. That you may command my services at all times is a matter of course. My respectful regards to the ladies.

"In greatest haste, yours,

"ULRICH ENGERHEIM."

Prince Eyckhof had forthwith repaired to the palace. He had heard from the *portier* that the countess had given orders that no friend was to be admitted, and that she was still asleep; he had learned, moreover, after he had acquainted himself with the particulars, that there was evidently nothing for him to do, that the matter had been referred to the proper authorities, and that anything further must be left for Count Iseneck himself to manage. He had gone back home, and at the breakfast-table reported to the ladies all that he knew of the affair. Alix had run up-stairs to convince herself that her diamond crescent was in place. Juliane's sad case was deeply deplored; then Alix and her parents consulted as to the

best measures to take, in order to insure the safety of their persons and property in this wicked Berlin.

The consultation led to the resolve that Prince Eyckhof should telegraph to Menthin and have Nero's mother Freia forwarded forthwith to Berlin. Nero's excellent and dreaded qualities were inherited from his noble mother. "And if Freia barks in the night," said the prince, "we shall not quiet her."

The self-control which the count had been able to exercise was not to be looked for in a young girl. When Alix came in front of Juliane's couch she bounded back in horror, and hot tears gushed from her eyes.

"Dear! dear! How you do look!" cried Alix, as she sobbed aloud. "You poor, poor darling! What must you have gone through!"

Alix bent over her and kissed passionately Juliane's eyes, cheeks, and lips, and her glowing caresses had the same effect upon the patient as healing, soothing balm, and moderated the heat that flamed upon her cheeks.

"Yes, I have stood a great deal, Ali," said Juliane, hoarsely. "And I am ill besides. Keep very quiet. I dare not get excited!"

Alix nodded; she wanted to say something, but could not get the sounds over her lips. She swallowed several times, and pressed her handkerchief to her eyes, in order to stem the course of tears that would come. But she did not succeed in this. She straightened herself up, and whispered, in words broken by sobs, "I am not going—I'll come back directly—quite reasonable—excuse!" and from behind the Spanish screen she stepped forth into the spacious apartment. There she was unseen, there she could weep to her heart's content, there poor Liane would not be agitated by the sight of her emotion. She stepped to the glass door, pressed her forehead against one of its ice-cold panes, and from tear-veiled eyes gazed out upon the glittering expanse of the snowy park, while with her handkerchief she kept her lips closely covered, in order to stifle any audible expression of the sympathetic grief with which her bosom was rent; and she gazed constantly upon the snow, upon the tracks that led from the door, down the steps, and through the broad walk to the gate of exit—ever upon those peculiar tracks, those of the one foot being deeper and sharper, those of the other flatter, fainter, and longer—and since she had long been accustomed to associate everything that she saw and

heard with Prince Ulrich von Engernheim, she thought to herself that if Prince Ulrich had gone that way he would have left just such foot-prints. And while she was thus indulging her childish fancies, and at the same time shaming herself because at this moment and this place she could be thinking of her own affairs, she gradually grew calm. Once more she pressed her handkerchief to her eyes, dried them now actually, and with a sweet, compassionate smile went back to Juliane's bed.

"Here I am again," whispered she, tenderly. "And now I am quite still and sensible."

She was about to drop upon a small chair at the bedside.

"Here," said Juliane, almost inaudibly, but beckoning her to sit beside her.

Alix cautiously seated herself on the bed, laying Juliane's hot hand between both of her own, as she supported her left elbow on the mattress and bent over her sick friend, who faintly smiled as she gratefully cooled her burning face by contact with the girl's fresh cheeks.

"You ought to have had more confidence in me," continued Juliane, softly.

Astonished, Alix looked her in the eye.

"I, dearest Liane! You think I have shown lack of confidence in you. Tell me when and how, pray! I really do not understand you. Ah! you must mean something of which I had no right to speak to anybody—not even to mamma. Really, it is nothing as yet. It will not be anything until my seventeenth birthday. And even that I have only gathered from certain hints—nobody has told me anything at all. I only know that Prince Ulrich has spoken to my parents, that I have been allowed to read and answer his letters, and that I am to ask for nothing more before my seventeenth birthday. The prince must understand it this way, for in his expressions toward me he is just as charmingly amiable and cordial as he is guarded. That is the whole truth, Liane, and besides ourselves you are the only one who knows it. You see, my angel, I do not mistrust you! But my chattering excites you, and now, really, the talk ought not to be of me. If I could only do something for you! You poor darling, how you must have suffered, and are suffering still!"

Alix had breathed rather than spoken all this. Juliane listened to her with half-closed eyes, again and again pressing her glowing brow against the fresh cheeks of her young cousin.

"If you were only a little older—you might do something for me," gasped she, with painful efforts.

"Ah, Liane!" responded Alix, with eager cordiality. "I can be very sensible. You should only try me!"

"You see, Ali, I am ill, very ill. Do not say a word against it; I know best! I want to give you a commission. But you must not let your feelings be stirred up, and, above all, don't cry! I must husband my little bit of strength. So—I can not write any more, and I have something to say to somebody whom—perhaps—I may not see again for a long, long while. I want to dictate something to you."

Alix let go her hold on Juliane's hand, rose up slowly, and went to the desk. She fetched thence a portfolio in which were paper and envelopes, pen and ink, and returned to Juliane, who from exhaustion had now closed her eyes entirely, and seemed to have fallen asleep. Alix, as carefully as possible, put the ink upon the candlestand, and, holding her breath as she did so, noiselessly took her seat upon a low chair that stood conveniently near. She did not want to disturb the slumber of the patient.

She waited a long while and watched Juliane, whose still glowing brow was painfully contracted. After a while the muscles relaxed, only to be drawn up afterward more tensely than ever, her dark complexion looking more sallow than ever before, in contrast with the framework of hoary locks in which that old-young face was now set.

"I am not asleep—I am only thinking," said Juliane, after a long pause.

Again she opened her eyes, with an energetic motion, raised herself from the pillow, on which, however, she directly again sank back powerless, and said, in a rather louder tone:

"Write, then—in the first place, the date."

"Berlin, December 22, 1879," whispered Alix, slowly to herself, while at the same time she wrote down the words:

"Dictated to her cousin and confidante Alix Eyckhof by Juliane Iseneck-Wiking." "I have it!"

"'Our account is canceled?'"

Alix wrote—

"'Canceled.' Anything more!"

"Nothing more."

"And the address?"

"The address! I would rather have that written by somebody else. Add one thing more—as a matter of course—explain that you do not know to whom it is addressed."

Alix assented, writing a few more lines which, when completed, she read aloud to Juliane. "'By desire of my cousin Juliane, Countess Iseneck, I explain that I have performed the part of secretary, but do not know for whom this communication is destined.' Is that right?"

Juliane nodded.

"And now push the sheet into that side-pocket, close the portfolio, and lay it there—on that candle-stand—so that I may have it close at hand. There, that's right. God be praised! But now, really, I am tired to death."

"Must I leave you now, Liane?"

Juliane slowly made a sign in the affirmative.

"May I come again in the afternoon?"

The sick woman shook her head.

"Let me sleep now—sleep a long while. I'll have you call when I can see you."

Alix kissed Juliane tenderly. For some little while longer she kept her station in front of the couch, sorrowfully perceiving that a new and fiercer paroxysm of fever had come on, for, through Juliane's wide-open lips, the breath came and went in short, quick gasps, and her eyes were fast shut. And again Alix felt perfectly overcome by the sight of the terrible havoc that had been wrought in the body by the action of the mind—and that with such frightful rapidity. Yesterday—just about this same hour—she had been coaxing her bright young cousin to matronize her at the ball; and now, there she lay before her, desperately ill, gasping for breath, with crimsoned cheeks, her head having turned as white, in that one night, as if she were an old woman of eighty. The large, blue eyes of the blooming maiden were again suffused with tears, and, moved to the very depths of her heart, she slowly withdrew.

Count Iseneck had not found the old physician at home, and was obliged to give up, as hopeless, any attempt to overtake him upon his professional round of visits. When he again alighted before his own door, he saw Prince Ulrich von Engernheim turn into the front yard, conversing, as he walked, with Herr von Berwitz. He awaited the coming of these gentlemen at the door, and, after a polite exchange of greetings, he led them into the little

reception-room on the ground floor. At the very moment that they were about to enter, Alix left her cousin. Count Iseneck went up to her and pressed her hand, while Prince Ulrich and Berwitz bowed.

"Have you been bestowing a few minutes upon us?" said the count, addressing her. "Princess Alix can give us the freshest and most reliable news of the countess," added he, turning to the gentlemen.

"Poor Liane is not doing at all well," was the report that Alix gave in genuine sadness. "Her face is burning; she is tired to death, and can hardly talk. She has sent me away, and does not want to see anybody."

"Then nothing is left for us to do," said Ulrich, turning to the count, "but to express to you our heart-felt sympathy. If we could be of any manner of service to you—"

"I thank you, gentlemen," replied the president, while he strongly pressed the hands of both the prince and Berwitz, as had been his wont. "We must, first of all, wait and hear what the doctor has to say."

"At all events, we shall be allowed to call and inquire after the health of your honored wife?" asked Berwitz.

"Thank you, gentlemen," repeated the president, again bowing to the princess and her escorts, who had slowly moved toward the front door, speaking still in the politest manner. Then, with a darkly lowering brow, he entered his study.

Princess Alix, Ulrich, and Berwitz, followed at some distance by the servant, moved at a slow pace toward the adjacent Eyckhof mansion.

"It would strike me as frivolous, and I am not at all in the right mood," began Ulrich, "to chat over the ball with you now, as we proposed to do last night."

"And I am thankful to you for this," replied Alix. "I could not either. Perhaps, you gentlemen will come up for a little while? My parents are greatly troubled, and most assuredly what I have to tell them will not improve their spirits. It would be very good of you, if you would help me to chase away their sad thoughts."

The gentlemen gratefully accepted her invitation.

Out of her deep, leaden sleep, Juliane started in affright, when the doctor gently touched her hand. Breathing heavily, she cast an

agonized glance around her. Then she recognized the friendly, benevolent countenance of the physician, and tried to smile.

"I would like to have a very particular talk with you concerning my condition," said Juliane, in a much more animated manner than before, but at the same time with a hoarse, spiritless voice, "but alone." And, directing a look of entreaty toward her husband, she added, "You will not take it ill of me, will you?"

"Not at all," answered the count, earnestly. "What I need to know the doctor will tell me. I'll see you soon again, my dear." He softly left the room.

In a peculiarly agitated way and with nervous fluency, Juliane made the attempt to give an exact description of her suffering. She told him that she had the feeling as if that dreadful headache that tortured her into frenzy came from a thick roll of lace being wound about her head, until it cut into the brain. She had tried to undo the bundle and smooth it out, believing that if she could succeed in this, the unbearable pressure would cease. But it always balls itself together again. It must be held fast by concealed clamps. To the touch, too, it had the feeling of something iron—

"Do not get excited, countess," interposed the doctor. "I understand very well what you would tell me. We'll smooth out the bundle."

"I know very well that there is no lace, doctor. I am not in delirium. I only tell you how it seems to make it clear to you. This headache has the effect upon me of a burden of lace—"

"Certainly! I comprehend perfectly!"

"And then there is something else that torments me more than all the rest. You will laugh at me. It is childishness. In my sickness, I just exaggerate everything."

"What is it, then?"

"I have two letters to write—letters of no importance. It would be no misfortune if they should remain unwritten. But I can not get rid of the thought that those letters must be attended to. I say to myself it is madness! But that does no good. From all sides it comes back to me. I must write those letters."

"That is quite a common febrile illusion, countess. You must take something soothing, and you will think no more about the letters."

"No, doctor; no physic will help. I must get those letters off my mind. I have had all the materials for writing collected here.

I can not write. It is dreadful ! I can chatter much more than is necessary, can I not ? But I can not write. And I must write, else I'll find no rest."

"Can I relieve you of the task ?"

"May be so."

"You can dictate to me whatever you choose. I am only a machine. My death sentence, if you like."

"Then, write ; but be quick, else I'll forget again ! In the first place, the addresses. Envelopes are in that portfolio. Are you ready ?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Count, no not count, Herr Councilor of Legation von Berwitz, Wilhelmstrasse, and His Highness the Prince Ulrich von Engernheim, Hotel Royal."

The doctor wrote the two addresses.

"Thank you, very much, dear doctor. I am quieted already. Now I have what I want ; I'll find somebody else for the rest. Thank you."

She held out her hand to the doctor.

Lohausen regarded the dictation of those addresses as the whim of a fever patient, who thus only betrayed by one symptom the more to what extent her brain had been affected by the fierceness of her malady. He examined the sick woman very conscientiously. The height at which her temperature stood, and fluttering pulse, confirmed his evil forebodings.

"One question, doctor ! But please answer it directly ; am I to lose my reason ?"

"You will sleep, sleep a great deal, I hope. And when you wake up, you will feel better. Do not be uneasy. Keep just as still as possible. There will hardly be any necessity for your seeing any one. But, I beseech you, at present to admit no visitors whatever. Your maid will watch by you."

"Yes, Ida and the dog."

"The dog might involuntarily disturb you."

"No, he does not stir. The dog must stay by me, else I'll be mortally afraid. Nero !"

Obediently and very guardedly the powerful creature slunk back into his corner.

The physician took his leave. Toward evening he promised to come again. He made several prescriptions, had a conference

besides with the count, and then again departed. He had not been able to conceal from the count that the case was a very grave one.

As soon as he had left the park chamber, Juliane straightened herself up in the bed, by a superhuman exertion of all her strength, took from the portfolio the envelope addressed to the prince, folded up the sheet of paper on which were the few lines written by Alix, thrust it in the envelope, closed it, and rang the bell.

"Ida, take this letter, and see to it yourself. You can give it into the hands of the *portier* at the Hotel Royal. If anybody in the house questions you, simply tell them that you have to attend to something for me. Nothing else. Make haste; and then come back to me."

"I'll do just as you bid me, my lady."

Juliane smiled contentedly. The heaviest burden had been lifted from her.

In the midst of all those feverish excitements that had lashed and goaded her poor brain, one thing and forever the same thing, had emerged from the chaos in which her senses rioted. Ruthlessly and persistently one memory pursued her. She was forever hearing the sentence in which the prince inculpated himself, "Moral debt is never wiped out," and again that sentence which he had begun but had never been able to finish, "If you do not release me from that bond—" Then the watchful dog in the next room had giving warning of the crime being committed by a loud bark. She had not understood the faithful animal. Her whole being had revolted against the pitiable part that had fallen to her lot. The only thing that had somewhat lifted her out of her degradation was the right admitted to be hers by the prince himself of imposing upon him, the faithless one, condign punishment. And she knew that at her bidding Prince Ulrich would have become the executioner of his own sentence. At the time this had made her proud, but then after their dialogue had been forced to a conclusion and she had been left alone in her despair, it made her shudder. She thought no more of herself, no more of all that might still threaten her—she thought only of the one thing, that she had not granted his humble petition to release him from his bond.

And she did not want him punished even if she could never forgive him. She did not want him punished—and with him poor unsuspecting Alix. This she must let him know.

And she felt what a hold the fever was getting upon her, how it

was wasting her strength and clouding her mind. She could not speak, she could not write to him; she was helpless. Her ability to exercise self-control, her powers of invention were already weakened. Agonizing pain embraced her with a muscular force that almost took her senses away. If she should lose her reason! What if she could never tell him what she wanted to tell him! What if she should die!

This it was that again and again with strange persistency emerged from the surging floods of fever. She saw it everywhere most marvelously distorted. It crept out of the folds of the "Lamoral" lace, with which all her sufferings were linked, in her sickly apprehension. It was there, always there, and everywhere.

And now she was freed from that monster.

She sighed deeply three or four times, and then smiled in painful satisfaction. Perhaps he knew even now, at all events, he would soon learn what she had wanted to say to him. Now she had only her own sufferings to torture her. And if she should succumb to them—what mattered it?

In the midst of raging fever she had felt soothed; and when Ida came back with the announcement that her letter had been delivered, she smiled almost happily, turned over on her side, and fell sweetly asleep.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW THE ROGUES FARED.

JOHANN HOTTE and Bertha Schmider were transferred, in the course of the forenoon, to the examining prison in old Moabit, and were there admitted to a first hearing and strictly questioned by the justice in ordinary. The extensive and weighty report of Commissary Beyer furnished the cross-questioner, Councilor Briesen, with an excellent basis upon which to found his investigations. Hotte persisted in his obstinate denial; Bertha was hardly in a condition to give testimony. She did nothing but weep and wail, vowing that she knew nothing about the business. In accord with the commissary, the examining justice judged that the main thing to do was to prove the collusion between Hotte and Wildicke. In the interview which these two officers had, the commissary declared:

"We can not establish anything until we have caught Wildicke. He is one of the most desperate among Berlin criminals, being what his comrades call 'a sharp fellow.' If—as I am confident is the case—if he had anything to do with the business, he will very soon be trying to ascertain if his accomplice has been trapped and put behind bar and bolt, because he knows that Hotte is but a novice, and not to be depended upon. He must, then, be prepared for Hotte being brought to confession in the course of a few days. Wildicke will then disappear, and it will be hard to catch him. Weeks and months might elapse first. To-day and to-morrow he feels perfectly safe. I have therefore taken precautions to hinder any account of the robbery from being put in the newspapers as yet. To-day we could easily have Wildicke arrested, but even that would not serve our purpose. The best thing would be for me to come across him, as it were, by accident, while he is still going at large, and have a chat with him before his imprisonment. Of course, he will be very suspicious when he catches sight of me. He will know exactly why I have looked him up; but he will assume that nothing has been proved as yet. He will try to lie out of it, and by this means I shall probably learn all that I want to know. If we imprison him beforehand we shall learn nothing at all; and even in Moabit, here, a sharp fellow as he would find ways and means to prime Hotte. I can talk with the man in a very different way from what you would, councilor; and he talks with me very differently from what he does with the justice. I have therefore had all the places that he frequents invested by such of our agents as are unknown to him. These are his quarters, as entered upon the city register—the dwelling of his mistress, Rose Moockel, and the saloon in Buschingstrasse, where he is a daily guest. The girl Moockel is also being closely watched. As soon, now, as I can learn where I am likely to find him—and that will very soon be done—I'll look him up. He can not escape us in any event; but the principal thing is, and will continue to be, that I must first of all have a free and easy talk with him."

The justice of the court acquiesced heartily in this proposal. During the afternoon he repaired to the Iseneck palace in order to inspect the scene of the crime for himself. He obtained a view of the dressing-room, the press, which had not yet been pushed back against the wall, etc. The park chamber, alas! he could not enter, since the countess lay ill there, and the physician had left the

strictest orders that nobody was to be admitted. On the other hand, he convinced himself of the correctness of the observations made by the police authorities concerning the windows in Hotte's room. He could still recognize the circular-shaped spot that had been cleared of snow by the opening of the window, which brushed it off the lower ledge. He remarked, moreover, that the cross-bars of the lattice, which on the other cellar windows were evenly frosted over by snowy ice that was piled up in heaps on the bars, here, at Hotte's window, were only imperfectly covered with snow. Only the side staves had kept their white mantle, the middle ones being bare. They had to conclude from this that something had been thrust through the lattice in the middle, and that thereby the snow had been swept off. The foot-prints in the park which, by their irregularity, had made the commissary suspect that "Limping Fritz" had had a share in the crime, were still discernible.

Meanwhile, Wildicke was cozily at home with his Rose.

Rose dwelt in the center of his business operations, about a hundred yards from the Gray Misery in Gottnowstrasse, and not much farther from his business friend in Mehnerstrasse.

She had rather small apartments in Buschingstrasse, consisting of a modest bedroom and a kitchen, rented of her aunt, who was a laundress, and did not take her meals at home. There was a good understanding between aunt and niece. The niece had her own furniture and her own kitchen utensels, and paid almost the entire rent. For this the aunt rendered her various little services.

The small iron stove glowed, and it was insufferably hot in that little room with its one window. But these two were not particularly sensitive to changes of temperature. Rose had fixed up her little room until it was a model of neatness. She had herself prepared their midday meal, cleared off the table, washed up the china and glass, and spread a white counterpane over the bed.

In a cage sang a canary-bird, and a pretty cat lay curled up on the hearth, not far from the stove, and purred over a half-emptied cup of milk. Wildicke lay on the lounge in his shirt sleeves and trousers, smoking a cigarette and reading the day's paper. Frequently he would interrupt his reading in order to converse with Rose.

She had made herself very comfortable. She had cast aside her dress and corset, and, thus disrobed, sat opposite him at a table,

busy over a task. Her bronze morocco boots, with their many buttons and high heels, formed a marvelous contrast with the utter negligence that otherwise characterized her appearance.

"I am thinking and thinking," said Wildicke, "if there is no way of cheating Tigel-Eden into buying those pearls and stones."

"Do not trouble yourself. He will not get them for a present. I persuaded him all I could. Why, he actually grew affectionate, the old swindler! and I made out that I was pleased. But as to taking those pearls and stones—not a chance of it! I had to implore him until I was tired before he would even relieve me of them; but longer than four-and-twenty hours he will not be responsible for them—there is too much peril linked to them, he thinks—and if I do not fetch away the booty to-night, to-morrow morning early he'll dump the whole batch into the Spree."

"So he thinks that the things are valuable, does he?"

"He does, indeed. My goodness! he does not think he can dispose of them—at least, not here, and he can not now get away from here. He told me that I ought to take a little art journey to St. Petersburg. He would give me a safe address, and pay a thousand marks down and five thousand marks afterward! He thinks the whole lot will bring from sixty to eighty thousand marks."

Meanwhile, Rose diligently went on with her tailoring.

"A thousand marks down and traveling expenses!" repeated Wildicke. "But supposing the thing comes to light, it all bursts up, and we have the bag to hold! Yet with the eight hundred marks that Tigel-Eden is to pay us for the gold setting we can not go far. And then there is Hotte; we have to give him half—at least a hundred and fifty marks."

"He will be content with a hundred marks."

"That is so. He owes me money, too. I'll give him fifty marks on account of it, and we are quits. But what are we to do with the jewels? We must get them into some place of safety, and I don't trust one of the brothers. And it must be done directly, too. One never knows what will happen. Perhaps they will have me shut up this very evening—I do not think they will, but one must think of everything."

He fell into a brown study. Rose stitched away. She had formerly been apprenticed to a cloak-maker, and was a skilled seamstress. During all this time she had been intent upon altering her large winter cloak, which was quite roomy, as was the fashion

of the day, and held together at the waist by a girdle. It was lined with a cheap, fawn-colored woolen plush, the same material as furnished the collar and facings. She had ripped entirely apart the two front widths and the lining across the whole width of the lower part. Spreading the "Lamoral" lace over this lower part she had tacked the widths together with blind stitches, firmly, however, so that the lace could not be displaced or rucked up, and then she had carefully restored the plush lining. Nobody in the world could suspect what a treasure was concealed between the material and lining of this cloak, which had been bought at a ready-made clothing-store in Prenzlauerstrasse for forty-eight marks.

"I have an idea!" suddenly exclaimed Wildicke. "If you are done, dress yourself. Fetch those stones from Tigel-Eden. On the way buy a Bible, not too large a one, nor too small either, nor a new one. Get it of some antiquary. And a sharp shoemaker's knife. My old blade is of no account any longer. And a little whetstone. You'll find that at the hardware-store. You have only to say for a shoemaker."

Rose did not ask many questions. She trusted blindly to her Wildicke.

Orderly as she was, she first put away her sewing materials. Then she put on her clothes, and took the ten marks that Wildicke handed her. When she had drawn on her cloak she felt and beat well the lower part with both hands. She was pleased with her work. No one would have noticed the least alteration in the garment.

"This lace is as light as a feather," laughed she; while stepping out, she lifted high first the right foot and then the left one. "I was afraid that it would make the cloak cumbersome, so that I could hardly walk, but I do not notice it at all. Let me see, there's to be attended to—the stones, an old Bible, a shoemaker's knife, and a whetstone."

"I'll wait for you here. Hurry up! And make good use of your eyes here and at Mehnerstrasse."

She bent over Wildicke, who had not changed his position on the lounge, kissed him tenderly, briskly put some more coals on the fire, and then disappeared with a friendly smile.

In the doorway of the house obliquely opposite stood a workman with cap and blouse bespattered with plaster. He looked after her, and sauntered along the street in the same direction that she took.

A few steps farther on he was joined by a man, evidently a mechanic, who wore a low, round hat, and came out of another house.

"That must be Rose," said the workman. "I believe we ought to follow her. That one there! Now she turns into Mehnerstrasse."

"Rose is nothing to us. We are to lie in wait for Halting Fritz. If he would only come along! One will not be enough to manage him. He would spell him out on the spot. And who is to carry the news to the commissary? We must quietly stick to our posts."

The two separated, and immediately afterward vanished, as if they had been spirited away.

It was nearly five o'clock when Rose came back. Darkness had long before set in. The gas-lamps had been burning for an hour. This time Rose was first observed by the agents when she was going in at the house-door. That she carried a bundle nobody noticed.

It was not merely the cold that flushed Rose's face. She had not yet been able to quiet down after her settlement with Tigel-Eden.

"Of course, he has swindled us again, the infamous scoundrel!" she burst forth, while she cautiously set a medium-sized package and her muff down upon the table. We have it; come, see. But to lie so to one's face, it passes all! What is the use of counting? Eleven stones are missing—and, depend upon it, not the meanest—and seventeen pearls! I wrote it all down exactly in his presence—fifty-two stones, forty-eight pearls. And when I count now—forty-one stones and thirty-one pearls. And, when I said to him, 'Eden, that does not agree with my count!' he became furiously mad, pulled my note-book out of my hand, tore it to pieces, and rated me as a good-for-nothing, bad girl! Then he counted out to me on the table eight hundred marks, and told me to begone as fast as I could. With such a pack of swindlers as we he would have nothing more to do. And if we were not content we were free to sue him. I took the jewels and the money, and did not say a word until I had everything stored in a place of safety. And he swore that if you should ever dare to make your appearance at his house, he would throw you out of the window. But thereupon I perked up, and gave him a bit of my mind. And then the old villain actually clutched me round my throat and pitched me down-stairs. I was so enraged that my impulse was to run for the police, and inform the lieutenant of that district: 'Clean out that nest in Mehnerstrasse! You'll find

many a thing there that you've been looking for.' But I thought that you would not like me to do that, and so I let it be."

Wildicke laughed heartily. The story struck him as being merely comical.

"You have done it very well, Rose! Do not fret yourself! The man deserved something, too. As for the rest, I'll climb to the top of his roof if I choose. Be entirely free of care. Have you seen to everything?"

"Yes, indeed. I have brought you change to the amount of four marks and fifty pennies. Here are the things!"

Whetstone and knife she took out of her deep side-pocket. The Bible was tied up in wrapping-paper. She undid its wraps. Then she stood the muff up, and out fell upon the table five irregularly shaped packages tied up in smutty newspaper.

And these were the glorious jewels and pearls of the Countess Juliane von Iseneck! These the costly jewels which had been the envy and admiration of the highest and noblest-born women of the empire! There they lay now, rudely broken out of their artistic settings, on dirty scraps of newspaper.

"Thunder and lightning!" exclaimed Wildicke, after Rose had undone the packages. "But they do sparkle! We shall get rid of them directly. Only no cutting up!"

Rose toyed with the precious stones, breathing upon them, and letting them flash under the flame of the kerosene-oil lamp. She had her enjoyment in this.

But Wildicke forthwith addressed himself to sober work.

After he had tested the sharpness of the stout, broad knife, he took the Bible, opened it at the tenth or twelfth page, pushed in a few leaves deeper the lid of a cigarette-box, inserted the knife about the width of two fingers from the top and two fingers from the left edge, he pressed upon it with all his might, and in the direction of the printed lines made a deep, straight cut, which he continued until it came to within two fingers' width of the right edge. Then he made a similar cut at the same distance from the margin of the book, and joined the two by a perpendicular incision, so that, by robbing the Bible of some of its contents, a hollow appeared in rectangular shape. The same process was repeated upon the pages following. Drops of perspiration stood out upon his forehead. The knife got dull. He whetted it upon the stone moistened with kerosene, and toiled on.

Rose had propped her elbows upon the table, and sat with her blooming face resting upon her two open hands. The table groaned beneath the pressure of Wildicke's powerful fist. She looked at her beloved admiringly and attentively. Soon there was formed inside the Bible a receptacle large enough to hold what they had to conceal, and yet when the book was closed there was nothing about it to awaken suspicion. The outward appearance of the volume was not injured in the least.

In this paper shrine, which was securely lined with paper pasted in, the precious stones were now concealed. The jewels and pearls were neatly packed by Rose in small packages of equal size, and then laid away in this remarkable casket. Since there was some rattling when the book was shaken, bits of paper were thrust into the crevices.

Thus these stolen goods were stored away within the pages of the most venerable of books, a book that could not seem out of place even in the possession of a Rose Moochel. Whoever chanced to pick it up would never have imagined the nefarious use to which it had been turned, and the foreign nature of its contents might even have escaped his eye if he had opened it.

In reverential emotion Rose flung her plump arms around her friend, of whose affection she was proud. The parts of pages cut out were immediately burned. The knife and little whetstone, that had done their duty and might become dangerous in case of the house being searched—an emergency that was ever impending—Rose threw into the water-pipe at Wildicke's suggestion, after he had broken them into small pieces. The cash (all twenty-mark pieces) was hidden under the ashes in the ash-pan belonging to the stove. When this was done, Rose shook bravely until a fresh layer of glowing white ashes covered over what was underneath. Wildicke had only kept one gold piece, which would suffice him for the present.

From experience Wildicke knew that the simplest hiding-places are the best. The most skilled detectives had conducted the last search which had been made in his room. He had the money after which they were searching in the very dwelling that they so closely scrutinized, in fifteen new hundred-mark bank-notes. Not a piece of furniture was left in place—bed-ticking, stove, everything was ransacked. And still nothing was discovered. He had put the notes in a common-looking envelope and pasted it on the back of a family

portrait belonging to his host, which had been hanging on the wall for years. One of the policemen had even lifted the picture up to convince himself that nothing was stuck behind it. He had not caught sight, however, of the envelope pasted to its back. Simplicity and unsuspecting appearance had been the leading purpose in the invention of his hiding-places.

Meanwhile the clock had struck seven. He had exerted himself a great deal. And there was astir in him a strong impulse to join his fellows in their common place of assembly; he longed after a game at that wretched, oil-cloth-covered billiard-table.

"Rose, you can call around at the Gray Misery for me about eleven o'clock," said he. "I will not take you with me just now. On such a day, one can never know what is going to happen. I must first make a short call at the Wild-Cat. So, about half-past ten I'll be at the Gray Misery. But do not come before ten. One can not know!"

Rose and Wildicke parted affectionately.

When Wildicke left the house he looked around, conformably to his custom. The street was badly lighted, and very lively at this hour. Nothing struck him as peculiar. The workman and mechanic followed him unperceived.

When he had entered the saloon, the two joined each other unconstrainedly. The one with the round hat on said to him of the smutty cap: "The commissary is at the Café Alexander between seven and eight. Take a drosky. If Wildicke leaves before you get back I'll follow, and as soon as he turns in again leave a sealed note with the host of 'the Cat' for L. L. If you do not find me you'll find the note!"

The workman ran to the nearest drosky-stand and drove to the Café Alexander.

"When he begins with the Wild-Cat he ends with the Gray Misery," said the commissary. "That is according to precedent! Drive quietly back to 'the Cat.' I'll finish my glass of beer and go from here to 'the Gray.' If, contrary to expectation, Halting Fritz should go anywhere else, let me know it in Gottnowstrasse. I'll be there in half an hour. But I know my Halting Fritz! He will run right into my snare! March, then!"

The workman drove back and reported to his colleague. Wildicke, meanwhile, was enjoying a game of billiards.

When toward eight o'clock the commissary entered the eating-

house in Gottnowstrasse, before which he had silently greeted other of his agents, he found a number of guests assembled there. All hushed as he came in.

"Pray, pray, children!" said he, affably, "don't let me disturb you! You all have clean consciences, I suppose."

"Haven't we, though, Mr. Commissary?" said one of the billiard-players.

"I will leave you unshorn! I am looking out for a strange uncle of mine, who was to have arrived from Cologne and taken his supper here."

"From Cologne, you say?"

"Yes, that is what I said, friend! Now, do not play the deaf! It arouses suspicion!"

"But I do not know of anybody from Cologne—really and truly, I don't, Mr. Commissary."

The commissary forced his way through to the counter. The guests had again resumed their conversation, at first, indeed, in lower tones, and the players played on.

The hostess, with her peaked cap, who very well knew that her weal or woe depended upon the police, greeted the commissary respectfully and politely.

"Give me a little drink—or rather a large one—of your white beer. I'll find somebody to help me," added he, smiling; and those sitting nearest who heard this smiled with him.

While the hostess was pouring out his beer Beyer stooped down to her and said, softly: "Keep dark! Was Halting Fritz here last evening?"

"Yes."

"With whom did he sit?"

"With the Hoarse Frog."

"Good!"

The commissary had meanwhile scanned the company with his eagle glance. Without moderating his voice or raising it either, he added: "Hostess! my beer there at yonder corner table. There is still a place vacant."

The commissary had approached the small table, at which sat the Hoarse Frog alone. The latter got up.

"Keep your seat. How long has it been since we were here together?" asked he, sociably.

"Since the middle of July, Mr. Commissary."

"And now we want to stay nicely outside, do we not?"

"You may depend upon that, Mr. Commissary. I have had my fill of it."

"Here's to your good health!" He drank to the malefactor, and offered him the glass. The latter wiped his lips, thanked, and drank to the commissary's health.

"Yes, Mr. Commissary, indeed, I have had my fill of it! If it only were not so cursed hard, though, to make a living in a respectable way! No good master will employ us. We have to show our papers everywhere—that is the thing! I was in an intelligence office; I had to run my legs off me—all for five marks a week! What can one do on such pay? And to eat hard-tack, day in and day out—nobody can stand it! Yes, Mr. Commissary, it is made very hard for anybody who has ever been under sentence."

"Listen! What is your real name?"

"Julius Heyssel, Mr. Commissary."

"All right, Heyssel; then I think I can get you a little job to do."

"I understand you, Mr. Commissary."

"You do not understand me at all. You think that I want to make you one of the police force, do you not? More offer for the force voluntarily than we can use. What I want to ask of you twenty persons would jump at, without my having to waste a word upon them. If you decline to render me the service, then, it is your affair."

"It was not so meant, Mr. Commissary. Fellows like me are glad enough of a chance to earn a few pennies—these hard times specially. As you see me here, Mr. Commissary—I swear it is the truth—I have not tasted a warm morsel since yesterday morning. Yesterday evening a dram—not a mouthful at night; fortunately, I had a couple of cigars—they properly belonged to Halting Fritz—I smoked them to-day; now I have again called for a dram, and I have exactly five cents left."

"Order some hot sausages directly. I'll pay for them."

"Thank you kindly; but I would rather not shout for them, else the fellows would think it did not agree with my funds. I'd rather fetch them myself."

Hoarse Frog came back with two steaming sausages and a loaf of rye bread. One could look at the wretch and see that he had not lied.

"You got those cigars from Halting Fritz, did you? Do you often meet him?"

"Off and on," answered Heysel, eating away. "Last evening we sat where we are sitting now."

"Do you know what I have been told? That last night you and he did a little business together."

"God forbid!" tranquilly replied the Hoarse Frog, while he continued to enjoy his food. "I can prove my whereabouts, Mr. Commissary, to the minute."

"But you were here together last night?"

"That is so. Was he at his old trade again last night?"

"That you are likely to know better than I."

"I know nothing in the world about it! That is so; but I thought something of the kind likely."

The Hoarse Frog had now consumed the sausages, and wiped his mouth.

"May I?" asked he, while he took hold of the beer-glass.

"Your very good health!"

"The same to you!" He emptied the glass at a draught. The commissary ordered a second one; at the same time he offered the Hoarse Frog a cigar, which he accepted gratefully, and immediately lit.

"So you really know nothing about this new undertaking of Halting Fritz! Then, I can tell you something," Beyer went on to say. "But keep mum."

"Mr. Commissary, nobody will ever learn anything from me."

"Well, Halting Fritz made a raid last night on Wilhelmstrasse."

"What's that you say? I had an idea of the sort myself. I noticed that he was called off from here about ten o'clock last night by a respectable-looking man."

"I know—a broad face, shaven, like a bull-dog's."

"Just so. He had the white and black ribbon in his button-hole."

"Yes, I know," repeated the commissary, composedly. Inwardly, he was jubilant; for the most important piece of information that he sought to win was now his own—the indubitable connection between Hotte and Wildicke. With apparent indifference, he continued: "But he did not go out with that man at ten, did he?"

"Yes, about ten o'clock. I may be out a quarter of an hour or

so, but it was certainly near about then. He came back again, though, after a few minutes."

"Ah, that indeed!"

"But it was merely to finish drinking his beer and to pay his score. I had for a long time been wanting to play nine-pins, and we left together. I noticed that he had something on his mind, and was a bit curious. I still stuck to his side. 'You must have your game of nine-pins, Frog,' said he; 'I'll come along presently.' 'I want to stretch my legs a little while first, though,' answered I. After a five minutes' walk, he says to me: 'Frog, you see that shop there; it is still open—go and get me a couple of cigars for five cents, there's a good fellow! I can not go in, because he has my name on his books.' 'Good,' says I. He gave me ten cents; I went into the shop, bought the cigars, and I came out on the street again—not a trace of Halting Fritz! He was gone. Then I suspected something was up."

"Of course; wait a second."

The commissary wrote with a lead pencil upon the white margin of an old newspaper that lay on the little table in front of him: "Drive directly to Wilhelmstrasse. Count Iseneck's palace. Get the *portier* Peterberg to follow you immediately. Come back here with him. Wait in the carriage at the corner of Neue-Königstrasse until I have you both called.—BEYER." He carefully tore off the strip on which he had written, and again turned to Hoarse Frog.

"Now you can earn your five marks quickly. Listen, now. After I shall drink to you with these words: 'Your health, little brother; how's the tenor?' you take it in ill part; you'll get up and leave the saloon. Then, outside, not far from here, somewhere in the neighborhood, you'll find a workman—light blouse, cap, both bespattered with plaster and clay. Speak to him and say: 'I come from the commissary.' He will give heed to you at once. Give to him this piece of paper, which he is to read. I expect him to follow out its instructions exactly. Do you understand?"

"Certainly I do."

"And have you a mind to do it?"

"Why not? When you poke fun at me I am to get mad and quit, look up the workman with the blouse and beplastered cap, and hand him the note? Nothing more?"

"Nothing more. After a while you are to come back pacified,

and if all has been done, come and hold out your hand to me, saying: 'Don't take it unkindly, commissary!' Then I shall know that everything is in order."

"And for that you'll give me five marks?"

"Here! Here it is now!" answered the commissary, while he dropped the coin into the Hoarse Frog's hand.

"Thanks! It is done."

Meanwhile the company had gradually resumed their free and easy manners. The criminal commissary Beyer, was dreaded, it is true, but at the same time beloved in a certain manner. He did not concern himself with trifles. He had a certain heartiness about him that took with the people. He understood their language and spoke it. The commissary's visiting dens exclusively frequented by evil-doers was not at all out of the common course of events. He talked confidentially with one or another, and often when not trying to entrap any particular person. He would treat them to beer, rum, and cigars. In short, he was sociable. The party concerned in a long, familiar dialogue with the commissary by no means rendered himself liable to be looked on with suspicion. Hoarse Frog was known to be entirely reliable by his comrades, and that he would peach and report a fellow to the police was something that nobody dreamed of laying to his charge. The little talk at the side-table, therefore, had excited no attention whatever.

A few of the guests, feeling uncomfortable so near to the commissary, had meanwhile noiselessly left the room, but others had taken their places. The confined space was overfull, as it had been the evening before, and the air heavy with tobacco smoke. The talk was loud and brisk, the billiard-balls clattering and rattling between whiles. The players were getting excited and beat upon the table; it was the very atmosphere, the very sound of the lower-class *kneipe*.

The male guests, who were close packed at and on the tables, and who also sat upon the window-ledges, were for the most part decently clad, a few of them even with some attempt at elegance; these wore showy cravats with huge imitation pins, sleeve-buttons with false stones, and light-colored overcoats. Among them mingled vagabonds in worn-out, ragged clothes of that marvelous greenish-gray color, to which the sunlight, in combination with wind and weather, after time tones down all colored stuffs. The number of female guests was comparatively small; one saw by their attempt

at style, their shamelessly painted faces and their loud voices, that they all belonged to the guild of women about town.

The commissary had risen from his seat and was looking on at the billiard-players while he exchanged a pleasant word with one here and there.

He had at different times sent for a glass of white beer, and had it to go the rounds.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHITHER "GRAY MISERY" LEADS.

SHORTLY after nine the door opened once again noiselessly—the bell only tinkled when one uninitiated touched the knob—and Fritz Wildicke entered, accompanied by two boon companions from the Wild-Cat.

When Wildicke caught sight of the commissary and exchanged with him a friendly greeting, his heart misgave him that his appearance here had reference to him. But he controlled himself admirably, nodded in an unembarrassed way to this and that acquaintance, and sought to read upon their faces the answer to his silent question, Was anything wrong? Evidently the others had nothing to tell him.

Beyer appeared at first to be giving no particular heed to Wildicke and his companions. But it did not escape him that Wildicke had again taken his old place at the corner table, and that directly a stranger, at whose entrance into the Gray Misery the bell rang, after going up to the counter and drinking a glass of *schnaps* had forthwith withdrawn. It was his emissary, who had to announce to the commissary by his mere presence that his orders had all been executed. It told that the eating-house was invested by guardsmen, that the nearest director of police had been notified, and that in the adjacent streets a larger number of armed men held themselves in readiness to come to his support in case of emergency.

Wildicke had keenly surveyed the assembled guests. When the commissary intended to arrest he was accustomed to go attended by at least one of his colleagues or an agent of the police. Wildicke was certain of this. He knew them all.

"How long has the snatcher been here?" asked he, bending

backward and directing his remark to a man sitting at a side-table behind him, the so-called Noseangel, of whom he knew that he had taken part in a burglary just a few weeks before, and who therefore could be trusted to keep a sharp eye on the commissary's movements.

"For a good hour," answered the Noseangel.

"Has something been going on again?"

"The affair does not concern us. He is looking for a Cologne man."

"For Bäckerhann?"

"Apparently."

"Then he comes two days too late. He was here day before yesterday in the evening."

"And to-day he is at Hamburg."

The dialogue was broken off at this point by the approach to this corner table of the commissary himself.

"Do you know you have taken my place? There stands my glass of white beer yet," began the commissary. "But stay, keep your seat, please!" continued he, while with his strong arm he forced Wildicke, who had made a move to rise, back into his seat. "I have been sitting the whole time, and there will soon be another vacant place. Guess," whispered he, with a confidential smirk at Wildicke, "how I'll get rid of the Hoarse Frog! But, in the first place," he continued, in his ordinary tone of voice, "let's have a little something to raise our spirits more. Halloa, host! Another glass of best beer. Now, friend Heysel," jested he, turning to the Hoarse Frog, "how goes it with the divine art? Is it really true that Pollini wants to engage you for good and all?"

Wildicke and some others laughed.

"Be done now with that, Mr. Commissary!" replied the singer, pettishly.

"But I have just read in the papers that you are engaged to sing at Kroll's next summer."

The others laughed again.

"I say, that is enough, Mr. Commissary! I'll not stay here to be made fun of!"

"Look here, Hoarse Frog," continued the commissary, amid the joyous approval of the very grateful and unthinking crowd about him, while he spun around the huge, freshly filled glass with his powerful hand and lifted it on high; "I've always said there is

nothing in this world that beats a fine male voice! So here's a health to you, little brother; here's to speedy deliverance from hoarseness and a fresh blooming forth of the tenor."

"Now, I've had my fill of this!" cried the Hoarse Frog, rendered furious by the increased merriment of the company nearest. He darted from his seat, picked up his cap, and went off, while Nose-angel and the others shouted after him various jeering remarks.

"See!" laughed the commissary, as he turned to Wildicke, "that is how one comes by a seat! I told you there would soon be a vacant place."

"Yes, you have made good your word, Mr. Commissary!" assented Wildicke, contentedly.

"Between ourselves, I wanted to have him away, because he need not hear what we have to talk about. You must know, Wildicke, that I have been concocting a plan to have a good rational talk with you for a long while. You ought to come to me sometimes—if it does not suit you at the Molken Market, because you are known there, we could accidentally meet somewhere else, eh?"

"We can talk here, Mr. Commissary."

"I want to talk freely with you. Policemen of the common stamp, we can find more of them than we want—but not such fellows as I love to work with. And one does not get much by simply listening around. I should like to find somebody who stands on my side with open visor as a government officer. And then I thought of you, Wildicke; you are a fine fellow. You know a thing or two, and you are the very sort of a person I am looking for. Verily, Wildicke, you are too good for a criminal. And you must be heartily sick of the uncomfortable life! If you could at least lay by something regularly. But only look at the whole set! They all go to ruin as they are, and finally are glad to find food and shelter in the house of correction. There are no exceptions, I tell you, and if you fancy that you are going to be any exception, then you are mistaken, that's all. You may trust my experience. Wildicke, it is high time for you to reform and try to become a good fellow. If not—how long will it last, and we collar you again?"

Wildicke had put on his thinking cap. Was the commissary in sober earnest with his proposition, or was he only setting a trap to catch him? He wavered, but in any case he was not unpleasantly affected by the commissary's friendly words as to his capability, for Wildicke was vain, like all criminals.

opposite to him smiling so provokingly. And every minute was precious to him. A respite from the gallows might, perhaps, be still won—then Rose could be conveyed to a place of safety, and who could say what benefit he himself might not reap from this respite?

"How in the world can you have anything to do with a low fellow like this Hotte?" said the commissary, again renewing the conversation in a tone of fatherly correction. "He says, of course, that you alone, Wildicke, did everything, planned all, executed all. I told Hotte to his face that he lied. Nobody bored through that press but himself. That's plain. But he swore over and over again that you did it."

"The rascal, he did!" blurted out Wildicke. "I know nothing at all about a press."

"Hold—hold, my friend; now don't you begin the same sort of a game, else we are done directly. Hotte stands to it, moreover, that last night he fetched you from here after ten o'clock. Will you deny that? Then, I'll prove it to you on the spot. I have nothing to do but to stand up and order business to stop. Just let me have the doors shut, and ask, with a loud voice, if nobody saw a thick-set, closely shaven man come in last night and carry you away with him. And if nobody speaks, I'll have the whole company ordered off to prison; and if the hostess has seen nothing either, I'll lay an embargo on her shop, and she'll lose her license. I'll lay you a wager, Wildicke, we'll find more witnesses than we want."

"I believe you, Mr. Commissary. That Hotte was here, I don't deny. I only say I know nothing about the press. And if he asserts that I bored a hole through it, then he is a barefaced liar."

"Hostess!" exclaimed the commissary.

The lady with the friendly eyes and bedizened cap approached Beyer respectfully. He turned from Wildicke and whispered in her ear: "I can not budge from this spot. So, send your husband or son around to the corner of Neue-Königstrasse. They will find a drosky there, or it will soon come. The messenger is to give word to the two men who will be sitting in it that I want them here directly. Do you understand?"

"To be sure I do, Mr. Commissary."

"Shall we drink another mug of beer?" continued Beyer, in his ordinary tone. "Hostess, another one, foaming."

Again the woman stepped behind the bar.

"However that may be," resumed the commissary, "Hotte will

have it that you are the contriver of the whole thing. Every single thing lies at your door. It was you who slunk through the park ; you, again, who were to the fore in Wilhelmstrasse, where you were to receive the things he put through the window to you—”

“Such a villain !” cried Wildicke, while he beat upon the little table with his fist.

The commissary smiled. He knew that he had struck the nail upon the head.

“Why did you have anything to do with such a crew? Now, you have to swallow the whole pie. They know how you are booked at the police court. You have been punished many times already. And if Hotte sticks to what he has said, he will very likely be out of it altogether, or at least come off with only a light punishment. Heretofore he has not come under censure, and has the iron cross, which, you know, will have its effect upon the court. And you will have to choke down by yourself the mess brewed for you by Hotte and Bertha.”

“No, Mr. Commissary. They shall find out who I am. And, if they drag me in, they shall knuckle under, too. I promise you that.”

“And little good that would do you. Since you have been in it, the lawyers will never believe anything but that you were the chief sinner.”

“And I know nothing about it at all. Hotte did not tell me what he was up to. We have known each other a long while, Hotte and me. We went to school together, and were in the same company, too. There, he came, then, last night, wheedling me : ‘Here, Fritz, old fellow, you must do me a favor, and it will do you no harm. Come between twelve and one to Wilhelmstrasse, in front of our house. I’ll give you something through the window. Just you take it, and carry it to Wilhelm Square. There’ll be somebody waiting for you at old Lieten’s. Give it him.’ At first I would have nothing to do with the thing. But he teased me so long that I gave in to it for the sake of pleasing an old friend. And this is all one gets for his silly good-nature.”

“Wildicke, what sort of wild-goose tale is this you are telling? If that’s what you’re up to, palming off on me a lot of silly stuff about some great unknown at old Lieten’s, I’ll not believe another word.”

The street door was now opened, and Beyer recognized, at a glance, Peterberg and the agent.

"And so you have never met Bertha?"

"Never."

"Then, to be sure, what tales that man has been telling us!" exclaimed the commissary, pointing to him who now entered, and elevating his voice, he called out: "Here, Peterberg."

Peterberg forced his way past the billiard-table. The agent followed him. To him Beyer said: "Ask the hostess to have a chair brought for Mr. Peterberg. If we sit up a little closer, there's plenty of room for all."

"Good evening, Peterberg! Let me make you gentlemen acquainted with one another—Mr. Wildicke, Mr. Peterberg, *portier* in the palace of Count Iseneck."

Peterberg had seated himself. He declined the commissary's invitation to have a glass of beer. The agent remained standing by the bar.

"Well, my dear Mr. Peterberg, what we have to settle here concerns nobody else," began the commissary again in a stifled voice. "Look at this gentleman here closely. Have you ever seen him before?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Are you sure of it?"

"Perfectly sure."

"Do you know the gentleman's name?"

"I have just heard you call it 'Wildicke.' At that time he called himself differently—'Schmider.'"

"Like the chambermaid Bertha?"

"Yes, he said he was her cousin."

"That, indeed. And where was it pray?"

"Why, at our palace; I had Bertha called myself."

"And when did this happen?"

"At the end of June or the beginning of July, shortly before the count and the countess went away for the summer."

"Now, Wildicke; what have you to say to this?"

"The gentleman is mistaken. I was never in Count Iseneck's palace."

"So the gentleman is mistaken, is he? You are positive that you are not mistaken in your man, Mr. Peterberg?"

"Perfectly positive. The gentleman limps. He supported himself on a stout yellow bamboo cane. I am certain that there is no mistake about the matter."

"Where is your cane, Wildicke?"

Wildicke was silent. The commissary peered around. There stood the cane he was looking for in the corner by the door.

"You see, Wildicke. Here is a stout yellow bamboo reed. Isn't that comical? Well, Mr. Peterberg, we are through for today. I thank you."

Peterberg got up and was glad to be allowed to make his escape so soon from that dingy, stuffy, overcrowded saloon.

"With your lying you'll plunge yourself deeper and deeper into the mire," began Beyer again; "and you can easily guess whither your path from here leads."

Wildicke sullenly gazed straight ahead of him. Then it was immediate delivery to jail without favor or clemency. For an instant he wavered. Would it profit him if he should tell a part of the truth? Would imprisonment be, at least, postponed thereby?

"Mr. Commissary," said he, after a while, "I perceive that I have committed a folly. I ought not to have played the go-between. But I can only repeat to you, that I know nothing about the matter. I only wanted to do Hotte a favor that he implored me to do."

"Now, Wildicke, one last word, What have you done with the things? Leave me to handle that 'great unknown' at old Lieten's with ungloved hands! If you only tell me the truth, I'll deal with you as gently as my duty will allow me to; but, if you try to deceive me, just look out for a tough time of it. Well, you may as well finish your mug of beer as speedily as possible and follow me, you and that one there, too," he said, pointing to the unsuspecting Rose Moockel, who was just coming in.

Wildicke turned pale when he saw Rose stepping so unwarily into the lion's den. He made a movement as though he would get up.

"Nothing of the sort. Keep your seat!" ordered Beyer. "And make no signs. That is what I must insist upon. At the very first attempt you will be isolated."

He beckoned to Rose to come forward, for she had suspiciously paused beside the billiard-table.

"Come, take a seat and join us, Fräulein. Here is one place still free."

Rose timidly drew near. At the behest of the commissary she took her seat on the chair which Peterberg had just left. The

commissary sat between the two. She cast questioning glances at Wildicke, who, however, avoided them, for he knew that in such cases the commissary was not to be trifled with.

"We were just talking about the affair of last night," Beyer explained to the girl, who looked utterly disconcerted and at a loss to know what to do in the difficult situation in which she found herself. "Hotte and Bertha Schmider have made a clean breast of it. They have put the whole blame on Wildicke. I want to befriend Wildicke, and the stupid fellow is lying himself into the penitentiary. Press up closer, my dear, we do not want to kick up any fuss here. And you, Wildicke, turn around with your face to the billiard-table, so that you can not see Rose. And do not attempt to give her your cue. We want to ascertain at once if Rose is going to lie to me, too. Look at me, Rose, and listen attentively. I am going to ask you something now—something of no significance at all, but I want your answer. I know the truth. If you utter a falsehood, I'll wink at that fellow in uniform at the buffet over yonder, whom, no doubt, you have seen before in Buschingstrasse; he is one of my agents, and in the twinkling of an eye, he'll be down upon you and have you off to the police court in a jiffy. There, now you know how the land lies. And now I ask you: Where did you meet Wildicke last night?"

Rose trembled violently. She knew what hung over her, if the commissary caught her in a lie.

"In Friedrichstrasse," said she, trembling.

The commissary slowly drew his head nearer to hers, and gave her a penetrating, menacing glance out of his keen eyes.

"The first time," she added, being intimidated.

"Wildicke, do not stir!" called out Beyer, imperiously. "Well, and then?" queried he further, while he firmly clutched the girl's trembling hand.

"Then on Wilhelm Square," gasped Rose, reluctantly.

Beyer let go the girl's hand.

"I wanted that confirmed by your testimony. You have not lied. On Wilhelm Square. Now, Wildicke, you can turn around again, and we can go on with our sociable chat. You see, Wildicke, I wanted to give you a lesson, for you to act upon hereafter when you become a member of our *posse*. All criminals lie, but much truth always lies imbedded in their lies. When you told me just now that you had passed the things given you by Hotte to another

person on Wilhelm Square, I knew directly that there was some truth in your tale. And now I know all about it. The things that Hotte handed you through the cellar window you gave to Rose."

"What has Rose said?"

"Hold your tongue!" commanded Beyer, in low, but emphatic tones. "You have only to answer when questioned. We are talking to one another on a different key; now, my friend, where are those things? Answer. Well?"

"Mr. Commissary, if you would only believe me—"

"Where are the things?" vociferated Beyer, with flashing eye. "You are silent? Good. I am done with you. And now I ask you, Rose Moockel—and I bid you reflect, that so far as your fate is concerned, all depends upon your answer. For the present I am prepared to admit that you were merely obliging your lover, without knowing what you did, and therefore I need not push matters to extremities. Through silence you make yourself a sharer in your companion's guilt, and I'll have to close my account with you, too, on the same terms. I now ask you, Rose Moockel: Where have you carried the things that Wildicke gave you on Wilhelm Square?"

Rose's anxious looks rested upon Wildicke, who sat glowering, the very picture of moody despair.

"Look at me!" said the commissary. "You refuse to answer me, do you? Very well!"

The commissary got up and fetched Wildicke's heavy cane forth from its corner.

Meanwhile Wildicke whispered, while he placed his hand over his mouth:

"If you come off free, take everything and be off!"

The commissary had turned. He again stepped up to the little table, and struck upon it peremptorily with the heavy stick, so that Rose shrieked from affright.

"Quiet!" exclaimed the officer, in a stentorian voice.

All knew that voice. It grew deathly still. Every one glanced in alarm at the corner whence resounded those thundering blows. All felt that something dreadful was impending.

"You, there, at the billiard-table, open a way! Every soul of you move across to the beer-table! And without chattering! Forward!"

That part of the saloon lying next the street was forthwith vacated. All the guests silently crowded to the other part beyond the

billiard-table. There was the same kind of noise as when chased rats scamper across the floor.

"Silence!" called out the commissary. "Barthel!"

The workman with the beplastered cap and blouse, by means of a few powerful thrusts, forced a way for himself through the throng around the beer table.

"Summon the men!"

Barthel vanished. Immediately afterward the shrill, piercing sound of a whistle was heard in the street immediately in front of the door, and then at some distance sounded a similar whistle in response to it.

Every drop of blood left Wildicke's face. Rose covered her eyes.

"Move off there!" was the order given by the commissary to the guests at the side table. "We need no neighbors."

These, too, got up now and silently joined the dense throng collected at the counter.

Beyer stood between Wildicke and Rose, who, having been seated at the little corner table, arose at the same time that he did. He had pressed his left hand to his lips, and his right one rested upon Wildicke's stout staff. He looked sternly, even forbiddingly, before him. His brow became deeply furrowed. His lips were firmly closed. Like an avenging fury in bodily shape stood the muscular man, whose erect bearing showed that he had once been a soldier, confronting the two criminals.

About these three was a vacant spot.

It would hardly have been deemed possible that so much free space could have been procured in that close, overcrowded room.

The whole company was packed together in a few square feet of flooring. All the tables were forsaken next to the street wall and the side wall, near to which stood the small table around which had been seated Beyer, Wildicke, and Rose. The empty chairs produced a very peculiar effect. The gaze of all the rest, who drew up together like a distressed flock of sheep upon the approach of a tempest, was fixed upon these three.

A storm was raging within Wildicke's breast. One minute more, perhaps hardly one minute more, and he would be parted from Rose, not to meet her again until she sat by him on the criminal bench. Rose must be saved. He had really loved the girl. And then she alone knew where the stolen property was; she alone

could get it to a place of safety. Yes, she had everything—the lace in her cloak, the gold in the box of ashes, the pearls and gems in the Bible—everything!

No, not everything!

Tigel-Eden had stolen some of the precious stones and pearls. Likely enough the detectives would be put upon him. That, perhaps, might free Rose and implicate Tigel-Eden, upon whose track he had been this long while.

“Mr. Commissary,” whispered Wildicke. “One more word, I beg.”

“What do you want?”

“Mr. Commissary, let Rose make her escape. She knows about nothing. I’ll afterward explain everything to you fully. But do let Rose go!”

“Be quiet there!”

At the same moment the street-door was opened and four officers of justice in civil uniform appeared, followed by two policemen, also uniformed, and a guardsman, all of whom entered the saloon noisily with a heavy tread.

“One second more!” cried Wildicke, in an imploring tone. “Do, please, Mr. Commissary! One single second more! I’ll tell you everything!”

“Stand there at the front door!” was the word of command now given his men by the commissary. “The man has something more to tell me.” And, turning to Wildicke, he said, “Make it short!”

“Well, then, Rose *is* a good girl. She dreads lest some incautious expression of hers might do me harm. Yes, I did meet her on Wilhelm Square, that is true. I was to carry the two little bundles that Hotte had given me to a house where it was not safe for me, because I was watched. And so I said, ‘Rose, do this errand for me.’ And the poor girl, who knew nothing about it, did me that favor. Mr. Commissary, this is the truth. And if Rose now tells you where she deposited those little bundles, and if you find there what you seek, then you’ll see that we got no good out of the affair. And Rose knew nothing about it, Mr. Commissary. And then, please, sir, let Rose off.—Now, Rose, tell Mr. Commissary openly where you carried those little bundles.”

“To Freeder, of Mehnerstrasse,” said Rose.

“To Tigel-Eden, you mean? Ah! so, indeed!” answered the

commissary. "Has that man again resumed his activity? Well, then, we'll find the things directly."

"But now you'll let Rose off, won't you, sir?"

"Not yet! Rose must remain in ward. This very night we'll make a thorough search of Tigel-Eden's premises, and of Rose's room, too. If we find what we are looking for with Tigel-Eden, and not with Rose, showing that she has merely been guilty of a folly, so far as I'm concerned, she may go to the devil! And now march. Forward!"

While Wildicke was apparently searching for his hat he again whispered quite quickly, "Take all—decamp!"

The commissary noted well that Halting Fritz had conveyed some word to her, but Rose alone understood his meaning.

"Three steps to the front!" he ordered Halting Fritz, in a stern tone; and to Rose, "Stay where you are!"

He beckoned forward two of his *posse*.

"Search him!"

In a few seconds Wildicke had been divested of coat, vest, and boots, and the pockets of his pantaloons turned inside out. They felt over his whole body. Every piece of his clothing was inspected. There was nothing suspicious in any of the things that he had on his person—a pocket-knife, with dull blade and rusty hinges, a silver watch with a pinchbeck chain, a writ in his proper name, a *porte-monnaie* containing one-and-twenty marks, a few prospectuses of a circulating library novel, a pocket-handkerchief, four cigars in a paper case—that was all. One of the officers took the articles into custody.

After this matter had been attended to, Wildicke dressed himself again, one of the policemen cocked his hat upon his head, and the other one took his station by his side. The latter with great dexterity cast around his right wrist a very simple sling, made of not excessively thick but strong and firm packthread. At the end of the sling, which was put on only loosely, a stout bit of wood, about a hand's breadth long, was fastened, and this the policeman shut up in his left hand, while he let the packthread slip between his third and fourth fingers. The sling in no way incommoded Wildicke so long as he held his hand still. But, by the slightest jerk, by the least attempt to escape from his guard, it was immediately drawn fast by himself, cutting into his wrist with unbearable pain. Through this nothing less than artistic precaution the prisoner was made

utterly incapable of resistance, and so, despite his uncommon bodily strength, he was compelled to follow unresistingly the man who held the wooden handle fast in his doubled-up fist.

"And now move on!" commanded the commissary.

Wildicke advanced to the door, with an officer of justice on each hand and a soldier bringing up the rear. The chief guardsman led the way. Two other policemen took Rose between them, and the soldier in uniform followed.

"Slowly forward! To the drosky-stand!" Beyer called after them. Thereupon he turned to the rest of the company: "You can take your seats again. But no one must leave the saloon within the next ten minutes. I'll have a guard set, and put up with no foul play. Hostess, your bill shall be settled to-morrow. Good evening."

"Good evening, Mr. Commissary," came echoing back from many voices.

Then again it grew quiet and motionless. The procession of officers of the law with culprits in charge had already left the saloon. Now, Beyer, too, who had donned again his heavy, gray, imperial cloak shut the door behind him, and at the same instant among the hitherto petrified guests there arose a general, uneasy movement, accompanied by the wildly rushing sound of loud voices. The event of the evening was being discussed by everybody in animated fashion.

The prisoners were forwarded to the police court in two droskies. Beyer rode in the one with Wildicke. On the way, once more, with all his might that unhappy man asseverated Rose's perfect innocence, and exerted himself to represent the girl as a pitiable victim to his own cowardice.

"If you had not made a perfect fool of yourself, by dint of your cunning, you might have spared the girl any unpleasantness."

"Yes, Mr. Commissary, I know I have been a blockhead. I see that now, and I want to make up for my stupidity. You must observe that. And you are going to find at Tigel-Eden's everything, if he has not already made way with it."

Wildicke did, indeed, calculate upon the pearls and precious stones embezzled by Tigel-Eden falling into the hands of the police. He hoped that thereby Rose would be acquitted of criminal partnership. "However," continued he, "you will believe Tigel-Eden sooner than you will me, and he out of revenge for the trouble I've

got him into will lie outrageously, in order to blacken me and poor Rose, who knows nothing about the affair."

Beyer quietly let Halting Fritz have out his say.

"If you would only believe me, Mr. Commissary! As surely as you live, sir, Rose has had nothing to do with this business. Out of simple good-nature she carried off those things, and that old swindler actually pushed her down-stairs—that he did, the wretch!"

"You just be still, Wildicke; we'll see about it! We'll investigate the matter thoroughly this evening or to-morrow morning early. For the present, nothing is to be done."

Wildicke and Rose were put into solitary confinement in the cells annexed to the police court.

That same night, under Beyer's guidance, the shop of Edward Freeder, in Mehnerstrasse, was subjected to a strict search. Over the door that worthy had put a sign-board announcing himself as conductor of a "commission business." They discovered tools of all sorts, a small smelting furnace, soldering hammer, fire-proof crucibles, tongs, dross in a coal-scuttle, several bars of gold and silver, a considerable number of objects of *virtu*, ivory carvings, pieces of mosaic and the like, a heap of jewels of moderate size; but, apart from these, wrapped up in newspaper, was a packet containing four magnificent sapphires and seven large diamonds of extraordinary beauty, and another one holding seventeen of the purest, most lustrous pearls. Beyer knew that the sapphires, diamonds, and genuine pearls were stolen. He immediately conjectured, and rightly, that these stones, whose value was patent to the ordinary observer even, must be a portion of Countess Iseneck's jewels.

Edward Freeder, the so-called "Tigel-Eden," was forthwith put under arrest, in spite of vehement protestations. The articles attached, which could be transported without difficulty, were taken in charge by the police. An official seal was affixed to the dwelling.

Of course nothing was found at Rose Moockel's. As for that matter, it was not supposed that Wildicke and Rose were such simpletons as to attempt to make a place of deposit for such valuables a tiny room to which the attention of the police would be turned the very first thing. The articles still missing had undoubtedly passed through Tigel-Eden's hands, and there most assuredly were the channels of disappearance to be sought.

The policemen entered a pretty, orderly little chamber on Buschingstrasse, where the stove was still very warm, and the turned

down kerosene-oil lamp was burning peacefully. On the hearth purred a pretty cat. The canary-bird's cage was covered with a dark cloth. When the lamp-wick was turned up, and the cloth removed, the bird awoke, began to plume himself, and hopped several times from one perch to another, and peeped. The bed was searched carefully—nothing suspicious. The clothes-press was opened—a few articles of clothing of trifling value. On the chest of drawers a photograph-album, full of the likenesses of friends, male and female—Wildicke was among the former, dressed in uniform; a Bible, an old series of "Family Journals," and various other books. In the drawers were a few underclothes in good condition; nothing else. Under the bed were some women's and men's slippers; the latter belonging to Wildicke. Every nook and corner was searched, but without result.

The aunt, from whom Rose had rented her room and kitchen, testified of her lodger, that Fräulein Rose was a pleasant, quiet, and orderly girl; and, at the request of her landlady, who had been put to great expense lately, she had already, in the middle of December, prepaid her first quarter's rent. Such a good girl was not to be suspected of any meanness.

The police officers withdrew in an hour's time. They had every reason to be content with their seizure in Mehnerstrasse.

The criminal Commissary Beyer that same night drew up the following report:

"I have ascertained the following facts: As was apparent at first sight, the robbery had been planned a long while ahead. As early as the end of June or beginning of July Fritz Wildicke, through Bertha Schmider, had gained access to the palace of Count Iseneck (witness, *portier* Peterberg). The crime was executed, according to scheme, last night, December 21st. Shortly after ten o'clock Hotte had called Fritz Wildicke out of the saloon in Gottnowstrasse. Hotte had given as the reason of his going out so late his purpose to make some Christmas purchases. Wildicke, then, soon afterward left the saloon, and in a cunning manner got rid of his companion, Julius Heysel (witness, Heysel). He then looked up his mistress Rose Moockel, in Friedrichstrasse, and arranged to meet her again, at a later hour, on Wilhelm Square (confession of Wildicke and Moockel). What part Wildicke took personally in the robbery has not yet been ascertained. He denies having been in the park or having penetrated into the house. On the other hand, the tracks

in the snow of the park and traces of moisture in the room put this beyond question. At all events, Wildicke managed to get into the dressing-room, and left it while the countess went for a moment into the park room. Then he went to the front, to Wilhelmstrasse, and from Hotte, who had possessed himself of the stolen articles, he had had these things—or at least a portion of them—handed to him through the trellised window that opens upon the street from Hotte's room (found out on the spot, confession of Wildicke). On Wilhelm Square he had handed these things to Rose Moockel. Of course no dependence is to be placed upon Wildicke's assertion, that he knew nothing of the origin of the affair, and had only wanted to accommodate his friend Hotte. On the contrary, it did not seem wholly incredible that Rose Moockel, who was entirely under Wildicke's thumb, should have, indeed, executed a commission of her lover without having any knowledge of the matter in hand. At Wildicke's behest she had conveyed the things to Edward Freeder of Mehnerstrasse, who had once already, long years ago, been punished as the receiver of stolen goods (testimony of Rose Moockel). The immediate search of his house seems to have confirmed the correctness of this statement. Among the numerous suspicious objects that we have laid an embargo upon are several apparently valuable jewels and pearls, which must belong to the spoils of the Iseneck palace.

"The search through Rose Moockel's lodgings, instituted at the same time, brought nothing to light.

"We did not think it advisable to make any search at Wildicke's quarters, since they had been thoroughly examined a short time before, and it was known that Wildicke had not set foot there for several days.

"Fritz Wildicke, Rose Moockel, and Edward Freeder are in the custody of the police, and it is humbly recommended that they be transferred to the prison in Moabit."

It was nearly four o'clock in the morning when Commissary Beyer left the police quarters at Molken Market. He was ready to drop from fatigue, but the pleasing consciousness of having worked to purpose, that the criminals—probably all implicated—were behind bars and bolts, and that a portion of the stolen property had been recovered from them, inspired him with a wonderful power of endurance. And with buoyant steps he traversed the silent, snowy streets, until he reached his own abode.

Next morning Rose Moockel wrote to her landlady and aunt, in faulty spelling, the following lines, which reached her without accident :

"PRISON, MOLKEN MARKET, *December 23, 1879.*

"DEAREST AUNT : A great misfortune has befallen me. They have arrested me. But everything must be cleared up soon, and I hope to be free by Christmas day. I only want to beg of you to take good care of my canary and my kitten. Please keep them for me yourself. Besides, only take my savings-bank book, which lies in my bureau-drawer, for all emergencies. And then shut up my room and bring me the key. I'll clean up everything myself when I come back.

Most affectionately, your loving

"ROSE MOOCKEL."

Her aunt conscientiously carried out Rose's wishes. She took charge of her animals and the savings-bank book, "for all emergencies." She locked up the room and carried the key to the police headquarters, where it was taken into official custody, with the rest of Rose's effects.

CHAPTER XIV.

BERTHA SCHMIDER'S EVIDENCE.

ALIX and Ulrich had thought that their days in Berlin would have been brighter. A dark shadow had fallen upon the joy of their being together, viz., Juliane's severe illness. That lady's sufferings had culminated in a grave attack of typhus fever. The patient must be spared any excitement whatever, for the doctor had ordered perfect quiet for her. Besides himself, the count, and Ida, nobody was admitted to the park chamber. Nero, the good creature, felt that his mistress was ill. All day long he lay in the remotest corner of that spacious apartment, ate little, and whenever he perceived that his mistress was awake, crept softly to her couch, with lowered head. Then he cautiously laid his huge head upon the counterpane, casting a sad look upon Juliane out of his emerald-green eyes, and then, if she would gently pat him, would slink quietly back into his corner with the same melancholy, crestfallen air.

During her sickness Juliane had only one thought, only one anxiety—the "Lamoral" lace.

Every time that the doctor or her husband approached her bed she would ask if the "Lamoral" lace had not been found. With utter lack of interest she heard the tidings, that all who had taken part in the robbery had been put under arrest, that already they had got back from them some very valuable jewelry and pearls, and hoped soon to recover the remainder of the stolen property. So long as the "Lamoral" lace was missing she could find no rest.

In the lucid moments that intervened between long and distressing periods of delirium, she could concern herself with nothing else but the "Lamoral." That old, jingling rhyme about it continually ran in her head. She tormented herself trying to translate it. She made dozens of futile attempts. And half in a dream she would go on trying, and finally fancied that she had found the German equivalent for the French play of words. But when fully aroused she found that this hoped-for solution of the torturing puzzle was as distant as ever. Finally, the following verse took shape in her brain, not satisfying her by any means, but giving the sense of the legend pretty well.

"Weh dir, O Lamoral!
Du tödtest die moral!
Bringst Schimpf und Gatten qual,
Lod durch das Gatten stahl!"

Those lines, either French or German, were never out of her mind. They had taken possession of all her intellectual activity. They had encompassed her brain as with a mighty bulwark, which had to be overcome ere any impression from without could reach her faculty of comprehension, and this had to be surmounted by her thoughts, too, ere they could gain the power to express themselves. All her power to think was shrouded by the "Lamoral" lace. She did not understand, without exertion, what was said to her, and it cost her no slight effort to collect her thoughts sufficiently to make any reply. All day and all night long she brooded in a strangely puzzled way over the mystery attached to that fatal lace.

She was fortunately rid of one uneasiness that had tortured her greatly. Prince Ulrich knew that she had released him.

When the prince came back to his room, late in the afternoon of the day succeeding that unfortunate night, he was deeply moved to find the meaning lines which had been dictated by the countess to her unsuspecting cousin. He had comprehended their sense very well; but he did not experience that feeling of relief which they

were intended to convey. If hitherto, with the levity of youth, he had put away sober reflection and always consoled himself with the idea that, after all, he had done nothing worse than many another; that since, from the very beginning, where a secret, confidential relationship existed, the possibility of a lasting public connection was excluded, and that therefore the solving of the secret tie must be mutually recognized as inevitable in a longer or shorter space of time; if he had told himself this and many another thing for the quieting of his conscience and for the justification of what he had firmly resolved to do, now, when the burden was to be taken away from him, for the first time he felt its oppressive weight. Julian's magnanimity touched him. He felt the deepest, tenderest sympathy with the unhappy woman, who, from her sick-bed, tortured as she was in body and soul, had sent him that tragic discarding, and an overpowering melancholy fell upon him.

He felt it as a benediction that, just at this period, a heavy weight of very grave and responsible professional duty devolved upon him. Often, from noon until late at night, he was in requisition at the office, and that superficial society, which would have left him undesirable leisure for indulging his sad thoughts, was naturally excluded.

Of Prince Eyckhof's family also he could see but little. And the fascinating Alix, who was wonderfully quick of apprehension, made no complaint. She, too, was saddened by the illness of poor Liane, to whose presence she was no longer admitted; and her sadness made her prefer to be alone. To Prince Ulrich she only wanted to show her smiling child-face; and she dared not complain, for was he not near her? Every day Ulrich paid her at least a brief call. He was serious, it is true, but, after she had chatted a little with him, his features brightened up. He loved her, she knew, and more she did not care to know.

On the 23d of December the papers had given official announcement of the robbery, together with an accurate inventory of the articles lost. High rewards were offered those who should recover the stolen articles or any portion of them. In the same number, under the head of "Proceedings in Court," stood a report of the suit against Sparber and Von Saza, which had been conducted that day. Those two proprietors of the infamous commission house had been sentenced to six months' imprisonment, a fine of a thousand marks,

and loss of their rights as men of honor. At the suggestion of the commonwealth's attorney, the court had ordered this sentence to take effect forthwith.

At the separate examinations to which the participants in the robbery had been subjected, through their efforts to lie out of it themselves and criminate the rest, they had given the sharp-witted inquisitors a picture of the actual facts of the case corresponding in every essential to the truth. Many a thing, indeed, was as yet unexplained, but nothing of any significance. The main point was established—that the persons accused and now in ward had planned, executed, and shared the profits of the robbery.

Hotte believed himself to have been betrayed by Wildicke, and Wildicke believed the same of Hotte, and in their separate examinations these two accused each other most unsparingly. That they were the principal robbers was established by their mutual criminations.

Wildicke's statements now bore down heavily upon Bertha, for, through all his lying, this much of truth was manifest, namely, that Bertha had been the first to suggest robbing her mistress; that she had shown Wildicke the rooms and the press, besides designating the most propitious moment for the consummation of the crime.

Rose seemed to be implicated the least. Wildicke perpetually reiterated that the girl had had nothing to do with the robbery. Hotte and Bertha, too, had nothing particular to say against her; the only one who brought a heavy accusation against her was the receiver of stolen goods, Edward Freeder, who stuck to it that he had forced back upon her the jewels which she had wanted to palm off upon him, and that it was only an unlucky accident that had caused a few of these to be forgotten and left with him. Rose, he declared, had everything.

Rose persisted in her statement that she had carried Freeder everything intrusted to her by Wildicke simply to oblige him without troubling herself at all as to the contents of the parcels, and that whatever was missing would certainly be found yet, either with him or some of his business friends. She explained Freeder's hatred toward her by declaring that the old rascal had made lover-like advances to her, which she had repelled.

The examination had been pending more than fourteen days, when, one morning, Bertha requested a new hearing in order to make an important communication to the investigating committee.

Councilor Briesen assented to this petition, so much the more willingly as hitherto nothing whatever had been elicited by the cross-examination of Bertha Schmider. She had constantly repeated that she was innocent, and knew nothing of the affair. Meanwhile, she had convinced herself, through the communications of the questioning lawyer, that the crime was discovered as to its most important particulars; that her participation in it was regarded as proved. She could but perceive that her simple denial would not go far; and so, in the long, monotonous hours of her enforced solitude, she racked her brains for some other means of freeing herself from her desperate situation. In her pardonable ignorance of legal affairs, she thought that the person robbed, Countess Juliane von Iseneck, instituted the law-suit, and that it could be put out of the world if the countess wished it. Her efforts, therefore, were directed toward inducing the countess to withdraw her complaint—such as she considered the case to be—and inasmuch as this was hardly to be attained by entreaty, she thought to try intimidation.

In pursuance of this aim, when granted the hearing for which she had petitioned, she made to the highly astonished lawyer the surprising communication that, on the night when the iron press had been broken into, another person had come through the park into the palace. She would not assert that this person had taken any share in the robbery. But just as well as this one, a third party might have slipped in unperceived.

And the countess would certainly wish no great stir to be made over this circumstance. She wished that they would repeat to the countess what she said, and she was confident that her lady would certainly withdraw her complaint and see to procuring the release of her maid, who had always kept her mouth shut.

The councilor called her attention to the folly of her conception, and declared to her that he attached no consequence whatever to this idle talk, since the guilt of the persons in custody had already been proved. But Bertha stuck to her declaration and urged that Countess Iseneck be made aware of her revelations.

And upon the lawyer remarking to her that he paid no attention whatever to such general and unmeaning suspicions, she came out with the positive evidence that, by the barking of the dog, she had been induced to leave her room, whither she had gone to undress, and to hurry to the back of the house, which opened upon the park. But when she got there, she was afraid to go into the

countess's room. She, therefore, ran up one flight of stairs, and looked through the hall-window, in order to see if there was anything suspicious going on in the park. And there she had positively recognized, by his figure and gait, his Highness Prince Ulrich von Engernheim, who came out of the park and went up the steps into Countess Iseneck's park chamber.

Hitherto she had kept silence, in order to spare Countess Iseneck, but, upon a pinch, one's first duty is to one's self. She knew that the countess would forgive her, and see that she, who had faithfully served her, was let out of prison.

The astute lawyer immediately saw through the girl's mean design. He honestly tried to explain to her that drawing uninterested persons into the affair would in no way benefit her; that it was not in the countess's power to interrupt the course of justice; that it was not the countess, but the state, that was the plaintiff—it all produced no impression.

Bertha insisted upon her statement being registered, and inasmuch as it was imperative upon the cross-questioner to take into strict account everything that went on in the Iseneck palace during the night of the robbery, and so important a circumstance as the entrance into that abode of a visitor while the crime was in progress, could not possibly be passed over in silence, it was manifestly his duty to gratify Bertha Schmider's express desire and take further measures accordingly.

On the very same evening an envelope, bearing an official stamp, was delivered at the Hotel Royal :

"His Highness Prince Ulrich von Engernheim-Kypstein, Imperial Secretary of Legation, at present on duty in the Bureau of Foreign Affairs," was summoned to be heard as a witness in the case of the Government against Hotte and confederates, accused of burglary, etc.

When Ulrich, after dinner in the hotel, received this summons he turned pale. He shut himself up, and, for the space of an hour, restlessly walked the floor of his apartment. He clearly perceived that a horrible pit was yawning before him, which might swallow him up, and destroy the life-long happiness of another.

He was ready ! Come what would, he must meet his fate bravely. He wanted to divert his mind. He went out. At the corner he took a drosky and drove to the circus. He was not deceived in his expectation that he would there find some acquaintances. In

the box next his own sat several females, accidentally close beside him Franzi, who was much too knowing to take it in ill part that the prince did not recognize her here. However, while a fresh-trained horse was being led in, she whispered to him:

"I can not tell your Highness what pleasure that watch has given me. And it goes to the second. Once lately, when I came home, my clock on the mantel-piece—a splendid time-keeper—was just striking three, and the little minute-hand of the watch you gave me also pointed precisely to three. I have not set it since that night, and it goes to the minute with my mantel clock. Bössow brought me the other day—as a peace-offering—a little enameled watch. I came very near throwing it at his feet. But then it would have broken, which would have been a pity, you know! But I only wear your watch—if it were only to tease Bössow. Look!"

She undid a button and drew forth the watch, which she smilingly considered.

This chit-chat was quite agreeable to the prince, although he made no attempt to continue the stolen interview. After the circus he went with several of his acquaintances to the club, and stayed there far beyond his usual time. He wanted to make the night as short as possible.

The next morning he called at the office to excuse himself, if he should by chance be rather late, since he had to answer a summons to court, and so, punctually at eleven o'clock, he found himself at the court-house. He was immediately asked forward. Councilor Briesen received the prince in the politest manner.

"I am very sorry that I have had to trouble your Highness. Will you not take a seat, sir? I have been forced to it, however, much against my will. It is undoubtedly known to your Highness that a robbery was committed in the palace of his Excellency, Count Iseneck, on the night of the 21st-22d of last December."

"Oh, yes, councilor."

"Well, one of the persons concerned in that burglary, the countess's former maid, Bertha Schmider by name, believes that it will be for her advantage if she can give a scandalous turn to the affair by drawing in persons of rank, if possible, and thus seeks to compromise her former mistress as well as others. In the first place, we have only to do here with the burglary and its supposable perpetrators. But those perpetrators have already been caught. Meanwhile, since a piece of information has officially been brought

to my knowledge, I must ascertain the fact. I shall have to read aloud to your Highness what Bertha Schmider has testified. It will perfectly suffice, if your Highness will declare to me that these assertions with regard to yourself are unfounded. I shall, then, no longer have any occasion to torture the Countess von Iseneck with the matter. We know that at present she is in no condition to attend to business, and this tattle of her maid would surely provoke her very much."

The prince nodded acquiescence, and in a dry, matter of fact tone the lawyer read Bertha's deposition. Ulrich sat there motionless during the whole time. When the councilor had finished reading and laid the document aside, the prince spoke :

"I accidentally remember that night very well," he began, in a calm, steady voice. "I arrived from Paris that very day, and in the evening attended a ball at Count Heddersdorf's, where I had the honor of meeting Countess von Iseneck. I remember what happened the more exactly as I was one of the first who got news of the burglary—yes, that very night, as I was passing through Wilhelmstrasse with a friend. Since the attempt is made here to stain the reputation of an honorable lady, I should not like to pass on with the simple affirmation that the maid has made a mistake, or, in plain terms, lied. I rather deem it my duty to prove that I was not at the palace that night, and circumstances render this very easy for me. I left Count Heddersdorf's ball a little before one o'clock—at the same time with Director Hillstadt, who teased me in the dressing-room about leaving so early. Director Hillstadt pulled out his watch—it was ten minutes before one. Director Hillstadt will bear me out in this statement. Since the weariness of traveling was still upon me, in spite of the weather, I went on foot to refresh myself. In such a violent snow-storm, I of course did not get forward very rapidly. I had an engagement with a party of young people at Kroll's. The first public ball of the season was being held there. When I entered the box I was very cordially greeted, and one of the ladies present jocularly lamented that I should have come so late. The director had just rallied me upon going so early, and now I was taken to task for coming so late—the contradiction amused me, and as I had just said that it was no longer so early, I now said that it was not so late, and proved the truth of my remark by showing my watch. It was precisely a quarter to two. This I know positively, for I calculated that it had taken me five and

twenty minutes to walk from Behrenstrasse to Kroll's, having lost about five minutes on account of the snow-storm. It is really wonderful that I should be able to report all this to the minute. It is explained by the accidental circumstance that at the two places I was asked what time it was by two different persons—one after the other—at my point of departure and the moment of my arrival. And between the two there lies only the time that it took me to make the walk."

"If such a thing were needed, your Highness could prove an alibi with shining success," remarked the man of law. "For the sake of completeness, it were well, perhaps, as you have already named one person, namely Director Hillstadt, to designate the other as well."

"If it is absolutely necessary. It is a Fräulein Franzl, member of the ballet corps at our opera. In case of my statement requiring to be fortified, she would perhaps be the more important of the two. With me she looked at the watch, and upon her admiring it—it was a worthless thing, be it observed—I made her a present of it. And when I accidentally met her last evening, she mentioned the pleasure it had given her, and especially praised the excellence of its works. She had not touched the hands, and the watch was still accurate to the second."

"Those are incontestable proofs!" exclaimed the lawyer, who was delighted at being able to exclude from the proceedings this unpleasant episode.

"I have one other remark to make," concluded the prince, "namely, that I left Kroll's in company with a friend, the Councilor of Legation von Berwitz; we went a few steps up Wilhelmstrasse in order to wind up our conversation, when we were struck by the Iseneck palace being brilliantly illuminated, and, upon inquiring of the *portier* what had happened, we learned of the burglary that had been committed."

"Very well! In conformity with your Highness's desire, we will draw up an accurate report of your evidence, which, without doubt, will utterly refute the tale which Bertha Schmider has trumped up. Perhaps it will be more agreeable to your Highness to dictate it yourself?"

"I am much obliged to you, sir."

Prince Ulrich dictated the representation which he had given the lawyer in clear, plain terms to the registrar, and affixed his signature to the paper.

He had already risen to his feet when he said in a half-whisper to Councilor Briesen, "Do you believe that it will be necessary to examine me in open court?"

"I hope that it can be omitted. Meanwhile I can not give a positive assurance; perhaps the defense may judge it necessary in the interest of one of the accused to have your Highness summoned. The question as to whether access could be procured to the palace by night without great difficulty is undoubtedly a pertinent one, and for the settlement of this question they will probably think it unavoidable to sift the truth or falsehood of Bertha Schmider's statement. I don't believe this will be the case, but it is not impossible."

"But that would be intensely disagreeable to me," replied the prince. "Not on account of the silly insinuation concerning the Countess Iseneck, for this slander can not affect *her*! From another reason—to speak confidentially—I am about to be married. And you may well imagine that it would be a poor joke for me just now to have to declare in open court that I met Fräulein Franzl at Kroll's on a certain night, and made a present to her of my watch."

"I understand perfectly. Upon the part of the attorneyship I can give assurance that your Highness's evidence will not be demanded; just as soon as the defenders of the accused are known I shall send your Highness word. And I do not doubt but that by personal representations you can bring those gentlemen to the same mind. And, in any case during the proceedings, all due consideration will be shown for the character and position of the Countess Iseneck and your Highness, and the honorable court will not demean itself by becoming a tool for the revenge of a treacherous domestic. In this view of the matter, the president as well as the prosecuting attorney and the defense will be a unit."

The gentlemen politely took leave of each other.

A dark shadow rested upon the noble features of Prince Ulrich von Engernheim as he descended the stone stairway. For the first time in his life he had knowingly told an untruth—untruth under the hardest and most stringent conditions. He had been obliged to utter a falsehood, for the truth would have ruined an unhappy being who had trusted to him too much. He would rather ruin himself by an untruth.

CHAPTER XV.

YOUTH AND JOY IN THE ASCENDANT.

SPRING had come. As soon as the carnival was over Prince von Eyckhof and his family had left Berlin and returned to Menthin. The relations between Alix and Ulrich had constantly grown more cordial and tender, while the public announcement of their betrothal was a question that should be settled in a few weeks. Ulrich coincided with his future parents-in-law in the wish not to do anything overhastily. He, too, had no objection to make to postponing the betrothal for a short while. As the youth of their daughter was the controlling circumstance with her parents, so Prince Ulrich, as he told Prince Engelbert, was reconciled to a little delay, by his official position; for the next weeks he would be closely engaged in the office, but then, as a recognition of his arduous and—as he dared flatter himself—not inefficient labors, a considerable advancement was to be expected. He now maintained that he had the ambition to be thus promoted and hold a place worthy of being mentioned in the diplomatic service ere he led home Princess Alix as his bride.

In truth, he felt sore and oppressed so long as the proceedings against the band of robbers were pending, and the possibility still existed of his being drawn into these proceedings.

The preliminary examination had been long since concluded, but the public trial had been perforce postponed, since the court had declared that the most important witness, Countess Juliane von Iseneck, could not be dispensed with.

Countess Juliane still continued to be a great sufferer. The obstinate fever had undermined her strength, and only very slowly had she convalesced during a sojourn of several weeks in the South. On one of the first days in April his Excellency, the President Count von Iseneck announced to the court that he had returned to Berlin with his wife, and that, although the countess was still very feeble and had to spare her strength as much as possible, she was, nevertheless, ready to obey the summons of the court, and take her place on the witness-stand.

The date of the public trial was now forthwith set.

The president, the commonwealth's attorney, and the defendant agreed to confound the nefarious endeavor of the accused to divert

punishment from their own evil deeds by lugging in matters that had nothing to do with the burglary. This villainous expedient was to be frustrated in short order, the deeply injured and afflicted countess was to be spared in every way, and the whole business—which was as clear as sunshine—to be dismissed as speedily and noiselessly as possible.

The legal defender of Hotte and Bertha Schmider expressed his regret at being obliged to yield to the determined wish of his clients, and summon his Highness Prince Ulrich von Engernheim to appear before the court. Meanwhile, inasmuch as he himself durst not expect the least advantage for his clients from this summons, he would do his best to mitigate the painfulness of the situation into which he would be forced through malice and a thirst for revenge.

Precautions were taken that as little stir as possible might be created by the whole affair. Among the general public the Iseneck burglary had long since fallen into oblivion. That Prince von Engernheim had been examined before a court of legal inquiry, and had now to appear as a witness at the public trial of the case, was not known to a creature outside of the persons immediately concerned in the affair. Ulrich, of course, had not mentioned it to a single friend.

Thus the public trial took place in the middle of April. The small space set apart for an audience in the court-room was occupied by hardly a dozen people of the lower classes, such as are commonly to be found at trials. Only a single representative of the press was present.

The accused persons: Johann Hotte (31 years old), colporteur Fritz Wildicke (33 years), lady's maid Bertha Schmider (26 years), Rose Moockel, without occupation (23 years), and commissioner Edward Freeder (58 years), were led in and took their places behind the bar. The inimical parties scowled at one another. Each one of the prisoners had given up the game as lost, and was only eager to throw the burden of the guilt upon the other.

The lawyers were all in their places, the court was declared to be in session, and the clerk of the court read aloud the very comprehensive bill of indictment.

The president, Director Hillstadt, cross-questioned the prisoners in a sharp, curt manner, and at any attempt on their part to say what was irrelevant and to prolong and complicate the proceedings by improprieties, he would energetically impose silence upon them.

Neither the conductor of the prosecution nor the defense felt it incumbent upon him to prompt the president to put special questions to the prisoners. In this way the examination of witnesses consumed a very short time.

The president had placed his own room at the disposal of the Countess Juliane and her attendants—the president and the privy councilor, Dr. Lohausen. He had extended the same courtesy to Prince von Engernheim as well. The prince, however, had not availed himself of this gracious offer, and was silently walking to and fro in the corridor.

He bowed low as the countess, leaning on the arm of her husband and followed by her family physician, passed by him and went into the court-room, through the door opened by the nuncio. He shivered.

It was the first time he had seen her since that fatal night.

What had become of poor Juliane—of that bright, haughty, animated creature, with glowing eyes and a wealth of dark hair? She had turned perfectly gray; her complexion was sallow, her eyes sunken, and she dragged herself along with slow, feeble, and inert steps—a gray-haired old woman of twenty-five!

The appearance of the unhappy lady made a deep impression also upon the legal fraternity, and even Bertha covered her eyes and sobbed violently.

The president had chairs brought forward, and begged the lady witness to be seated, in a voice that was full of gentleness, since she was evidently much exhausted. Slowly and very softly the president spoke to her, after he had got through with the calling of names and administered the oath: "I shall try to limit my questioning to the essential. The facts of the case in every important particular have been established by the previous examination and the confessions of the prisoners; the lady will, therefore, only have to say whether these statements are correct, so far as she is concerned. On the night of the 21st-22d of December the press standing in your dressing-room was broken into and robbed of valuable articles which it contained. You were in the adjoining room, the so-called park chamber. You had left that room a little while before, in order to get a soothing powder out of the medicine-chest that was in an adjoining chamber, being your husband's sleeping-apartment. Is this correct?"

"Yes, indeed, Mr. President!"

"Suddenly you heard the dog bark in your dressing room. You ordered him to be quiet. The animal, however, usually so prompt to obey you, was hard to compose. You had to call to him repeatedly. Then you heard a strange and peculiar noise. You rightly concluded that thieves must be at work. You softly opened the door of the dressing-room, whence came the noise, and called the dog for your protection. On that occasion you did not see, did you, what was going on in the dressing-room?"

"No, Mr. President; I stood behind the leaf of the door."

"Very well. Then you bolted all the doors. In the state of excitement in which it is conceivable that you were at the time, it is hardly likely that you could state precisely in what order you proceeded to bolt the different doors. At all events, you again went into the adjoining room, this time accompanied by your dog?"

"To be sure I did, Mr. President!"

"Thereby would be settled the possibility that, unperceived, one of the thieves could have escaped through the park chamber into the park," added the president, turning to the gentleman at his side. "Finally, my lady, you called the servants by pressure upon the electric bell, had the police summoned, and yourself had nothing more to do in the matter? And with this I believe that all the questions are exhausted which I had to put to you. On the part of the commonwealth's attorney will no further questions be asked? Of the counsel for the defense?"

Bertha wanted to get up. The defender, who had kept a sharp eye upon her, stooped down to her, and said to her in a tone of urgent entreaty, "Sit down!" Bertha cast one glance at the countess, again the tears came into her eyes, and she obeyed, sobbing.

"Then, I believe, madam, your duty as a witness is discharged."

The judge, the commonwealth's attorney, and the defenders made signs of approval.

"Lady witness, you are dismissed."

The count bowed his thanks to the gentlemen, who courteously returned his civility. He offered his arm to his wife. This brief examination had affected Julianne so dreadfully that she had to be almost carried out of the court-room in a half-fainting condition by the count and the doctor. In the president's room she gradually recovered sufficiently to be conveyed to her carriage, which slowly bore the poor unfortunate woman to her palatial home.

The evidence of the remaining witnesses was devoid of interest

up to Heysel's statement as to the meeting of the two principal criminals in Gottnowstrasse.

As the last witness, his Highness Prince Ulrich von Engernheim-Kypstein was heard.

After the customary oath had been administered and his attention had been called by the president—as is prescribed by law—to the fact that he would be justified in denying statements that might criminate himself, he declared that he had to make no use of this indulgence granted.

“This gentleman has been summoned as a witness by the express desire of Hotte and Bertha Schmider. I can not make out clearly from the written reports and the record of the proceedings what exactly is aimed at by this summons, and I shall be obliged to the counsel for the defense to give me some satisfaction on this point.”

“My clients,” began the counsel, “seem to attach value to establishing the fact that the Iseneck palace may have been visited by others the night of the robbery. For my part, in view of the facts proved and established, I should attach no importance to this circumstance, and would forego any testimony on the part of this gentleman, without doing thereby any injury to my clients.”

Now Bertha arose.

“May I ask a question, Mr. President?”

“What would you have?” said the president to her, ungraciously enough. “But stick to the thing in hand, else I'll have to prohibit you from talking altogether.”

“I only say that his Highness was there!” exclaimed Bertha.

“Sit down!” bade the president, imperiously; and, turning to the prince, he continued in a polite tone: “In the preliminary examination we have already given due consideration to Schmider's assertions. Does the gentleman now on the witness-stand adhere to his former statements?”

Ulrich bowed in assent.

By consent of the lawyers acting on both sides, this witness also was dismissed, who left the hall with a respectful bow.

Hereupon the president addressed himself to the spectators on the left, where seats were reserved for the newspaper reporters, and spoke in a warm, impressive manner:

“The publicity of our proceedings is necessary. But there are cases in which the public has to set bounds for itself. If criminals,

in order to disguise their own dark deeds, try to implicate persons of high and spotless character by drawing them down to their own level, the public should not aid them in their nefarious attempt. The question here is merely of a bold burglary, its abetment, and the receiving of stolen goods—this and nothing else. I need say no more, for further reminder or exhortation is unnecessary. Fortunately, our press is on the side of intelligent and respectable people, and will scorn to do involuntary service to those of the other sort. I now make room for the commonwealth's attorney to state the grounds of indictment and the punishment incurred."

The commonwealth's attorney gave a clear, comprehensive report of the transactions, as they had shaped themselves into fact, according to various hints dropped and assertions made by the prisoners themselves when cross-examined. He assumed that the robbery had been the joint work of Hotte and Wildicke. Wildicke had come through the park and forced his way into the house during the time that the countess left the park-chamber for the first time, and made his escape while the countess was bolting the doors in the adjoining room. In the haste with which he left the intruder had not been able to take the stolen goods with him, and had therefore hurried to the front of the house on Wilhelmstrasse, and there Hotte had handed him the things through the window. The complicity of Bertha, who had made the execution of the scheme possible by her exact information, was undoubted, as also the aid given by Rose Moockel and Edward Freeder, who received the goods conformably to his practice in trade. In view of the daring manner in which the crime had been committed, the breach of confidence of which Hotte and Bertha had been guilty, and the uncommonly high value of the articles stolen—which must be estimated as over one hundred thousand marks—he feels bound to sentence the guilty to condign punishment. For Hotte and Wildicke he recommends the severest punishment allowable, viz., ten years' confinement in the penitentiary; for Freeder, as the receiver of stolen goods in the course of trade, five years in the penitentiary; for Bertha Schmider, as accomplice, on the authority of paragraph 47, three years in the penitentiary; for Rose Moockel, as abettor, six months' imprisonment.

The counsel for the defense made honest efforts in behalf of their clients, and yet they could not but feel that they were struggling against insurmountable difficulties. With great eloquence they put

up a plea for diminishing the punishment of the two principal culprits, and mentioned circumstances extenuating Bertha's guilt.

The defender of Rose Moockel had the most grateful task. In the public trial no grave offense had been charged upon her, and with noteworthy clearness her lawyer drew attention to the fact that she had merely wanted to oblige her lover; that in her case there was lacking evidence of any evil intent, such as constitutes the necessary preliminary condition of the punishable.

The court of justice parleyed over the matter a long while.

The president pronounced the sentence, which, in everything essential, rested upon the written report of the commonwealth's attorney, but which in certain particulars respected objections made by the defense.

They were condemned: Johann Hotte and Fritz Wildicke to seven years' incarceration in the penitentiary and loss of the rights of citizenship for ten years; Edward Freeder to five years in the penitentiary and loss of citizenship for the same space of time. Bertha Schmider in consideration of certain extenuating circumstances to three years' imprisonment and the loss of civil privileges for five years.

Rose Moockel was acquitted.

She was forthwith set free. In the inspector's office, the clothing which had been taken from her when she went to jail, as well as all her belongings were restored to her in good condition—cloak, hat, umbrella, gloves, her *porte-monnaie* containing a few marks, and her room-door key, which her aunt had punctually delivered up.

The long confinement in prison had, it is true, blanched Rose's blooming cheeks, and she was really distressed at the condemnation of her beloved Wildicke—to whom she was actually attached—to long years in the penitentiary. But when on that lovely spring day she walked forth again as a free woman among her fellows, and could go unhindered on her way, a blissful sense of rapture came over her that filled her heart entirely, and left no room for melancholy repining.

Free! She had not dared to hope it, and when she heard how one after another of her accomplices was condemned, the only question in her mind—one that intensely excited her—was as to the extent of punishment about to be imposed upon her. Then there penetrated her ear the words, "free from punishment and costs"! And now she heard no longer the piteous sobs of her neighbor

Bertha Schmider, hardly took note of the warm, congratulating glance of Wildicke, who, in joy over Rose's happiness, for a moment had been able to forget his own hard fate—she had a full understanding of nothing but that one word, "free!"

Like one half intoxicated she left the inspector's office, ran along the corridor, and sprang nimbly down the stone steps of the broad stairway. She was happy—happy in spite of everything. Happy in spite of enforced separation from Wildicke, a separation that she opined would be of longer duration than those seven years which Wildicke had to pass behind the walls of the penitentiary—she knew that it would be forever. This really pained her. She had loved Wildicke, and was devoted to him now. But the poor fellow sat behind bars and bolts. And she was free! She said this to herself over and over again, and this blissful consciousness left no room for any other feeling. She reached the Lehrter Railroad station, without knowing it. She took the elevated cars to Alexander Square, and from there hurried to her lodgings.

Her aunt was speechless from astonishment, when, in some vexation, she responded to a violent knocking upon the door, and saw Rose stand before her.

"Yes, aunt, I am free! I am innocent!"

Her aunt would have liked to be very demonstrative, but Rose allowed her no time for this. After convincing herself that her bird and cat were in the best of health, without answering the questions addressed to her save by a consolatory, "Presently, aunt," she hurried to her room, and as usual locked it behind her. Her aunt looked after her shaking her head.

"Whew! how that little room did look! And what abominably stuffy air." She could hardly breathe.

She hurried to the window in order to open it. But she be-thought herself of something else. She looked upon the bureau. There lay the Bible. She opened the book, and closed it with a satisfied air. Coughing slightly she stooped down by the stove, drew out the ash-pan and raked among the ashes and cinders and smiled. All was as it should be.

Now she opened the window as far as it would go and let the fresh spring air stream in. Then she laid off her things, and began to restore some sort of order to the place, which had been completely upturned by the men who searched the house.

When the little room was properly aired, she again closed the

window, and drew the curtains firmly together. Over the latch of the door which led to her aunt's room she hung a towel. Her aunt, perhaps, had not lost her curiosity, and might be peeping through the key-hole.

But what Rose was about now no human being was to see.

Again she knelt down by the stove, drew out the ash-pan, and cautiously felt in the ashes. From that dusty, gray hiding-place she drew forth one gold coin after the other, and each piece she rubbed as clean as possible on her pocket-handkerchief, and laid it cautiously on another cloth that she spread on the floor beside her. She had got forty from Tigel-Eden, one Wildicke had taken for himself, and it was all right—all, nine and thirty, she had drawn out of the ashes. With extremest watchfulness she took from the cloth from four to five pieces, washed and dried them, and when she had thoroughly cleaned all the coins, while she sang in a loud voice, in order to drown the possible chinking of the metal, she made them up into four packages of about equal size, which she wrapped up in one of her longest and strongest winter stockings. These stockings with their valuable contents she now again lay in her bureau drawer, along with other stockings.

Now the main business was settled. She again opened the window, attended to her toilet, swept up the ashes, poured out the suspicious-looking gray water, and began to give the room a thorough cleaning.

After an hour she indulged herself with a little refreshment, and during this respite she discussed with her aunt, over a cup of coffee, the events of the last months. The aunt took advantage of Rose's sunny mood to break the news to her that she had been obliged to draw upon her savings-bank, because lately work had been very slack.

The good-natured Rose said nothing more than, "Very well, aunt."

She had something else to think of than trifles of the kind.

"I am not going to stay here any longer," said Rose, suddenly. "You will have no trouble in renting your rooms. I am going to Vienna."

"To Vienna?" asked the highly astonished aunt.

Rose, however, would not condescend to enter into further particulars.

Prince Ulrich awoke as to new life. Few knew anything of the prince's connection with the trial, and no one spoke of it. In a

few days all was forgotten, and the prince got back his youthful freshness and gay spirits. His friends remarked this to their great satisfaction, During these last months they had been uneasy about him and often exhorted him not to overexert himself in office-duty. Now, when he dared to resume his activity in a more moderate degree, he was quite himself again.

The important services that he had rendered by his indefatigable labor were, for that matter, honored in a conspicuous manner. Instead of the title of a councilor of legation he was attached to the embassy at Vienna as second secretary.

Before he repaired to his new post, he applied for and obtained a two months' leave of absence for May and June, "in order to attend to an important family affair."

Of what nature this family affair was, his superiors and colleagues in the office, as well as all his relations and friends, were made aware by the following announcement :

"ALIX, Princess von Eyckhof,

"ULRICH, Prince von Engernheim-Kypstein-Biesingen.

"Betrothed.

"Castle Menthin and Castle Kypstein, in May, 1880."

The marriage of this happy pair was solemnized at Menthin in the middle of June. It was a brilliantly festive occasion. There was only one painful source of regret, and nobody felt this more painfully than the blooming and radiant Alix ; and this was that the Countess Juliane von Iseneck could not participate in her cousin's happiness, being hindered from being present at the wedding by her still persistent malady.

Immediately after the trial was over, following the advice of her physician, Countess von Iseneck had left Berlin, under the charge of her husband, and retired to a quiet little village in the Berne highlands, hoping in utter seclusion and stillness, that her shattered nerves would gradually recover tone, and her system be restored to vigor. She must be kept from all excitement whether of a joyful or melancholy nature. Therefore Count Albrecht von Iseneck also was represented at the Menthin festivities only by a telegram of congratulation.

The blissful young couple passed the second half of June amid the glories of nature as displayed in the Tyrol and the salt-mining

district. On the first of July Prince and Princess von Engernheim took possession of a charming villa in the suburbs of Austria's magnificent capital.

Summer visitors to Vienna could but pause to gaze when the elegant looking Prince Ulrich passed by them, in company with his rarely beautiful young wife, and they followed them with admiring smiles.

There were rank, culture, immense wealth ! There were youth and love ! There was good fortune ! There were two perfectly happy beings.

BOOK THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT SPRING-TIME BRINGS.

THE glass door and all the windows were wide open, and from the bright park blew softly into that spacious apartment the intoxicating breath of the young spring. It had rained the night before, and now, from a cloudless sky, the sun sent its warm rays upon the fresh green and fragrant blossoms of the lilacs and chestnut trees. The leaves were gently rustling and the birds were twittering. Everything breathed a love of life.

Juliane sat at her lace-pillow, and with skilled hand threw the bobbins hither and thither. Now and then she would wearily lean back in her chair, throw her head back, close her eyes, and press her hands to her burning brow. But after a brief rest she would rally, with an effort, and resume her work with feverish diligence.

Physically Juliane had recovered long ago. Her beautiful rich tresses had now become evenly gray, and gave to her youthful face an antique character. Her cheeks had filled up again. But her eyes had acquired a strangely melancholy expression, and their pupils had perceptibly enlarged.

She made no complaints. She ate and drank sufficiently, and slept well. But, nevertheless, whenever her doctor left, his face wore an anxious expression.

She had become perfectly misanthropic. The presence of her husband excited her. Her mind wandered if she found herself in his company. Sometimes she would tremble before him and be afraid that he would do her some harm. Again, a strong nervous excitement would take hold upon her, occasioned by some trifle that she misunderstood, and this would increase to violent outbursts of

passion, nor would her passion abate until she was left once more alone. She besought the doctor, with hot tears, to see to it that she was left alone, entirely alone, else she would never be well. She wanted to see no one, no one at all! The doctor managed to persuade the president that at least for the present the wish of the patient ought to be granted, seeing that her condition called for the greatest indulgence.

For several months Julianne had been taking her meals alone. She received no visits. She hardly read the letters addressed to her, and answered none. After a time both visits and letters ceased. She did not even read the newspapers, and never a book. From time to time she would open her piano and strike a few chords, but its melodious tones jarred upon her feelings, and it seemed to her as if the keys evaded her touch.

Her only distraction from thought, the only employment in which she showed pleasure and skill was lace-weaving; so all day long she sat bending over her pillow, working persistently, assiduously, as if her subsistence depended upon it.

When twilight supervened, she would creep into the most remote corner of that great park chamber and thence look timorously toward the windows, watching the faint glimmering of dying daylight.

When the room had grown dark, with beating heart she would glide to the electric bell and press its button. Then Ida would silently set the lamp upon the table in the center, and another one on the little table in the corner, and again retire. This was done in accordance with Julianne's express desire. She hardly spoke at all, and wanted no one to say to her anything that was not absolutely necessary. Ida was perfectly familiar with her lady's ways, and frequently scarcely ten words were exchanged between mistress and maid in the course of a long day.

At ten o'clock of the night Julianne took her walk. She never left the park. Nero followed her every step. Regularly she took this evening walk—let it rain and storm as it would—in frost and heat. For about an hour—seldom less, but sometimes longer—she would slowly pace up and down the solitary, quiet walks; many a time the gardener watched the countess from an unlighted window of his cottage, and saw how often she would stand still and press her handkerchief to her eyes, as if she were weeping.

Thus had Julianne died to the outside world, died so far as her

neighbors were concerned, and, as though buried alive, she remained in her immense chamber, which she left only to haunt the park during the hours of darkness.

The servants knew that their mistress was grievously ailing and that the doctor's orders had to be obeyed. Ida always gave the same reply to people's questions, which were asked partly out of curiosity, partly out of genuine sympathy: Her poor countess was as good as an angel, still very ill, but on the road to get well—and there it stood.

Such had been the state of the case for two years; indeed, ever since Juliane's return from her sojourn in the Berne highlands, where she had remained almost an entire year.

Three times had spring come since that dreadful day when Juliane had been obliged to hold up her hand and take the oath administered to her in presence of those grave men clad in the black robes of their office, since she had exchanged a silent greeting with Prince Ulrich von Engernheim at the entrance to the court-room. What had the prince had to do at the court? She had not dared to ask any one. She did not know up to the present hour.

Thrice had the earth renewed her youth, thrice had the golden sunshine of early spring inspired with glad hope the heart of the afflicted. Still Juliane's soul groped along in the unbroken sleep of an unending winter. For her no young spring put forth, no bird sang, no blossom bloomed. The physician was the only person whom she ever saw, and to him she never dropped a word of complaint, save Ida, whose quiet manners made her endurable. For hours she would sit, gazing at vacancy, without pain and without pleasure, in a dull state of apathy; and when she aroused herself she would hurry to her lace-pillow, as if anticipating chastisement on account of her idleness, and work away with a sort of wild eagerness until her back ached and the bobbins fell from her stiffened fingers.

Thus she sat to-day, by the open window, working away nervously. Suddenly she started in affright. Everything unexpected shocked her. Ida, whose step had been muffled by the carpet, stood by her side, with a silver tray in her hand, on which lay a letter.

The countess trembled violently and her forehead contracted into a frown.

"I beg pardon most humbly," said Ida. "The old woman who

brought this letter was very urgent, and said she was sure my countess would read the letter, and answer it directly."

Juliane tore open the envelope and read the signature.

"It is well," answered she. "Tell the woman she can come back in an hour. I shall see if I have any answer to give."

Ida bowed, and left the room.

Thus ran the letter :

"BERLIN, May 13th, 1883.

"MOST NOBLE AND REVERED COUNTESS: For four weeks I have been out of the prison where I have been for three years. The little that I have saved, together with what was handed me from the poor fund, has been long since spent. I have been owing my landlady for board and lodging over a week, now, and she will not wait for me any longer. I have tried in vain to get a situation; but a girl who has been punished for theft and shut up in a penitentiary for three years nobody will have. I am quite desperate, and, in my despair, throw myself upon the mercy of your ladyship's tender heart. You well know that I have suffered innocently. If I had been a thief, I should not be so poorly off as I now am. That night I had gone to my room, just as your ladyship had bidden me do. When I heard Nero bark I went to the rear of the house, but did not venture into your ladyship's chamber. I wanted to see if some one had not slipped into the park and gone up-stairs; and there I saw that some one was, in truth, coming through the park. Wildicke did not come through the park, and those footprints in the snow were not his. If I had told all this at the trial everything would have been different, and I would not have had to suffer unjustly for three years. Surely, my gracious lady, you will take pity upon a poor girl that has always been discreet, and certainly has no wish to trouble your ladyship, and give her five hundred marks—a mere trifle to a great lady like yourself, but enough to make me happy, for with them I could get a start in life and leave Berlin, where I can not get into service. And I would be eternally grateful to you, dear lady, and nobody shall ever hear a word from

"Your most obedient servant,

"BERTHA SCHMIDER.

"P. S.—The landlady is waiting for an answer."

When Juliane had read the letter she rested her head upon her right hand and smiled.

She felt a sort of dreary satisfaction that now, at last, something had happened which she had always been expecting. She felt so completely sundered from her kind that she had no fear of what men could do. Nor could she for a moment entertain the thought of confiding in any one, of seeking the advice of some experienced friend. She comprehended very well that the object of the writer of this letter was to extort money; but this hardly ruffled her. She had also a clear feeling that if she gratified the desire expressed in the letter the woman's requisitions would not stop here. This, too, was a matter of indifference to her. In her cash-box, besides certain certificates of deposit, there were eight hundred or a thousand marks. She had no need for money. She no longer had any little wants to gratify; she no longer even made presents. So long as she had money enough to satisfy Bertha's demands she had no need to speak with any one on the subject. Then Dr. Lohausen would assuredly do her the favor to take any sum required out of bank for her, if she wished it. And why should she worry herself about future possibilities? How long would her future last, anyhow?

She got up and languidly moved toward a little cabinet in which she kept locked up things in general that she valued from one cause or another; for instance, mementoes of travel, reminders of a happy childhood, fans, pictures, letters—all helter-skelter. There was also a small iron chest of finest smith-work. From this she took five hundred-mark notes. She again locked up the cabinet. The sight of long-forgotten keepsakes, reviving happy memories, touched her sadly. She turned off abruptly, stuck the note in an envelope, and sealed it up without writing a line.

When Ida returned with the announcement that the old woman was there again, Juliane silently handed her the envelope. She was glad that the matter was done with, and with renewed zeal applied herself to her work.

As for the rest, Bertha had told the truth. She had actually tried hard to find a situation, always without success, and she was now in great want. In her distress, her thoughts had, of course, turned naturally, in the first instance, to her former generous mistress, and the idea took possession of her that she must ask her for a little help. Out of this request for a little help had grown imperceptibly—while she was composing her letter to the countess—that requisition of a sum large for a person in her circumstances.

She had not been fully conscious of her power, and been per-

fectly prepared to be paid off with a modest portion. She would have received this, moreover, with gratitude.

But now, when she opened the letter-envelope handed her by her landlady and found in it the five bank-notes without a word of reproach or exhortation, her covetous gray eyes fairly gleamed. A peculiar flush glowed upon her high cheek-bones, and she smiled in a meaning manner. In her utter poverty she had been low-spirited and humble enough. The wealth that she could now call her own inspired her with courage. She felt, as it were, elevated and strengthened. She knew now that she had a powerful support, and had a distinct consciousness that life could hardly go very ill with her any more, since the good countess would see that she was provided for.

The first thing that she did was to pay off her debt to her landlady to the utmost farthing. Then she pondered upon the best mode of establishing herself for the present. She was no longer in any great haste to find a situation; now she could wait and choose. Without doubt in time a person of her cleverness and attractiveness would be offered a place corresponding with her claims.

She dreamed of something like the dignity of superintending the establishment of some widower, or the responsible post of a lady's traveling companion.

But in order to scale these heights she must first of all cut loose entirely from present associations, and provide herself with a new and confidence-inspiring outfit of presentable clothing.

She lost not a moment. In the course of the very same day when she had come into possession of her capital, she made several important purchases, and in the course of the next few days the whole task was accomplished. She had the means, to be sure. And she was practical, thoroughly skilled, moreover, in all kinds of womanly work. She stitched away diligently on her landlady's sewing-machine, and at the end of the month was the owner of a new and complete outfit of which no lady's maid in a first-class house need have been ashamed.

Bertha had a very pretty figure. She held herself well, had good taste, and her whole appearance was prepossessing. In the distinguished families upon whom she had waited she had learned a great deal. Her address was modest yet self-possessed.

Besides that, she had passed through a very different school during these last years.

She had breathed the corrupt air of the prison, and seen and heard a great deal from contact with her fellow-prisoners. In the art of duplicity, cunning, and swindling she had unconsciously become almost an adept. She had also been able to take lessons in ways of making money in other than honest ways, and the letter to the Countess von Iseneck was a first fruit of the peculiar culture which she had had the benefit of in prison.

Before the end of the month she had given her landlady notice that she would have to leave, and on the first of May she removed to her new quarters. She took a neat, pretty little room at the house of a widow, whose husband had been a commissioner of taxes, and who resided near the Hallesches Thor.

Mrs. Mainhardt, a good, honest woman, very fat and wearing no corset, with a broad, smiling face, lighted up by a pair of bright, kindly eyes, with smooth gray hair, had not failed to draw her new lodger's attention to the regulations of her household, at the head of which stood strict propriety of conduct. Visits from male relatives or from a promised bridegroom were prohibited. Bertha had declared that she would not have stayed with a landlady less particular, since, as a lone girl in that great city, she needed to be protected by the good reputation of the house where she lived. Since, moreover, Bertha paid in advance for the month's board, the understanding between boarding-house keeper and lodger was immediately an assured one.

Mrs. Mainhardt in a short while got really fond of her "Fräulein." Her small household did not keep her very busy, and, like a genuine Berlin matron, the good woman felt a strong need for sympathetic companionship. She talked a great deal with Bertha, and since she was sincere and truthful herself, she believed everything that she told her.

When Bertha left the house for the first time, in order to introduce herself to a lady who was in search of a traveling companion, Mrs. Mainhardt ransacked her whole room, and the result of her investigations was in the highest degree satisfactory. Everything confirmed the correctness of the communications given to her by Fräulein Bertha—viz., that she was the daughter of a formerly wealthy merchant, who had been suddenly ruined, and afterward died. Through these misfortunes she had been forced to make a livelihood for herself, but that rich relations would always stand between her and extreme poverty.

Mrs. Mainhardt's only son, Theodore, a respectable young man, four and twenty years of age—the anti-type of his corpulent mother—a tall, narrow-chested fellow with very bright spectacles and sunken cheeks, was a clerk in the Chamber of Justice. He entirely coincided in his mother's good opinion of her new lodger. And during the hours of his work even he would be indulging pleasant anticipations of those interesting evening hours, during which, at his mother's side, he could listen to the fascinating conversation of *Fräulein Bertha Schmider*.

Fate had treated that poor young lady very cruelly. Through a certain bloodthirsty usurer, Moockel by name, the honorable Mr. Schmider had been first ruined and then goaded to death, and the daughter of that Moockel, named Rose, had been the means of plunging poor *Fräulein Bertha* into dire misfortune. In what way this had been done, *Fräulein* dared not speak out of compassion and a desire to spare her. Enough it was so. This Rose Moockel, who owed *Fräulein Bertha* a considerable sum of money, must even now be in Berlin, at least she had lived there for a few years. And it would be of great value to *Fräulein Bertha* if she could find out the present abode of this person. But this could only be done in the most cautious manner possible, and the name of *Fräulein Bertha* should in no case be mentioned.

Fräulein Bertha, to be sure, had no prospect of suffering; she had friends who would never desert her, her own relations and the Countess Iseneck, who had known her parents well, and in whose house she had passed the happiest days of her youth. But one did not like to apply to any one for support so long as one could help one's self. And she regarded it as her filial duty to renew the contest which her unfortunate papa had not been able to carry through.

Mrs. Mainhardt and Mr. Theodore had been deeply touched by these sad tales. The kind-hearted Theodore set himself seriously to render a knightly service to *Fräulein Bertha*.

Bertha was indeed anxious to discover the whereabouts of her old acquaintance Rose Moockel. She was convinced that Rose was the only one who had reaped any actual profit from the robbery. With the exception of the few precious stones and pearls that had been found at Freeder's, none of the stolen things had come to light. Evidently Rose was the only one who knew what had become of them. Either they had been sold, when Rose must have received the money, or they were, at least a part of them, still in some safe

hiding-place, when again it was Rose alone who could give information about it. But Bertha, who had paid the penalty of a three years' imprisonment, was of the opinion that she had thereby earned a just claim to her share, and had no idea of leaving Rose in undisputed possession of the common booty.

Theodore Mainhardt made use of his first leisure hour to institute inquiries after Rose Moockel at the office where was kept a list of the inhabitants. What he ascertained was not very satisfactory. A person of that name had certainly lived in Buschingstrasse three years before. But from there, in April, 1880, she had announced her intention of removing to foreign parts, and nothing was known of her present place of sojourn.

Theodore's zeal was not to be thus damped. He had relations with many government clerks, and through one of his friends he was introduced to an employé at police headquarters, who actually succeeded in procuring for the young man the desired information.

The sought-for Rose Moockel had been in Berlin again for some time, although, to be sure, under an assumed foreign-sounding name. The police had a rather peculiar reason for being willing to look over the palpable irregularity of passing under a forged name. Some cloud or other hung over Rose Moockel—the informer himself hardly knew what. Enough, she was still watched. She was apparently in good circumstances, and made quite lavish expenditures. This was the very reason why suspicion attached to her. The authorities wanted now to make quite sure of her. If she fancied herself wholly unobserved, she would perhaps be betrayed into some traitorous act of incaution; therefore, they dared not take her up for the assumption of a false name. Any meddling on the part of the police would have made her shy as a partridge.

In feeling words Bertha thanked her youthful friend for his successful efforts in her behalf. She pressed his skinny hand with its big knuckles so fervently, and at the same time her light-gray eyes looked so kindly upon him, that Theodore's own dull eyes behind their shining glasses involuntarily fell before them. At the same time, he felt something that he had never before experienced.

Bertha was determined to visit Rose Moockel the very next day in Krausenstrasse, where the address given showed that she was to be found, when at home.

CHAPTER II.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEAUCLAIR.

BEHIND Rose lay a life of vicissitude, teeming in events of many kinds, and this queer existence had wrought a complete transformation in her.

He who to-day saw before him that young lady with pleasing face, dressed with striking elegance, and composed in manners, would never have dreamed that this was the same person who, a few years before, at the small hours of the night, had swept with her train the side-walks of Friedrichstrasse, and on account of transgression of police regulations had been a not unfrequent inmate of the Woman's Prison on Barnimstrasse. That unprepossessing girl, whose only charm had consisted at that time of a healthy freshness, had developed marvelously.

When children taken from the dregs of society are teachable at all, then they are so in an astonishing degree; how in the shortest space of time, relatively speaking, they drop ugly habits and acquire praiseworthy qualities is well-nigh incomprehensible!

Already, on the day of her acquittal, which had taken her completely unawares and been a perfect surprise to her, Rose had resolved just as quickly as possible to leave the Berlin pavements, which burned beneath the soles of her feet. She knew, moreover, whither to direct her steps.

Among the companions who had shared her life she had had many pleasant acquaintances, but only one real friend. This was Antoinette Münzer, with whom, indeed, she had lived for a long while.

About a year before Rose's imprisonment Tony had been allured to the imperial city on the Danube by the enticements of a Viennese *kellner* from the national *café*. Arrived there, it is true that the *kellner* had basely deserted her, but, nevertheless, Tony had had no reason to repent her removal to Vienna. On the contrary. She had been legally married to a good, elderly man, free from prejudices, whose name was Tagmeier. She had become a decent matron, diligently helping her husband in his business, and not having made a single departure from the path of rectitude since her marriage.

Rose knew all this. Up to the time of her imprisonment she

had frequently exchanged letters with her friend. Tony had repeatedly invited her to visit her in Vienna, and if Rose's attachment to Wildicke had not chained her to Berlin, she would most assuredly have accepted this invitation. The time for this had now come.

She forthwith packed up her few things, bought a few more indispensable articles, and the next day set off for Vienna, having on her winter cloak; in her hand a small locked portmanteau, in which were only a Bible and a pair of long winter stockings. Her other possessions found ample space in a single trunk.

Rose was received by Mrs. Tony Tagmeier in the friendliest way imaginable. Rose told her that her last friend, with whom she had been living too long, had married, and broken off with her in an honorable manner. She had a few hundred marks, and therefore need not be anxious just then about ways and means.

Tony was sincerely rejoiced to see her good old friend once more, and to hear the unadulterated sound of her native dialect. Although there was not much spare room in her dwelling, yet she must insist upon Rose staying with her at first—indeed, would take no denial; afterward she would lend her friend assistance in procuring cheap board in the neighborhood.

Rose was well satisfied with this arrangement. She helped in the housekeeping, made herself useful in various ways, and thus won the regards of good Mr. Tagmeier. She was very comfortable and lacked for nothing—not even amusement; for, in company with her friends, she made acquaintance with many of the pleasures of that gay and beautiful city. She was too rational a person, however, not to admit to herself that this aimless life could not be of too long duration. She conferred with her friend, who found good and cheap lodgings for her, as she had promised. Rose had a pretty little room, in which she could do just as she liked, and was boarded by her landlady.

When Rose was about to move to her new residence, she said to Tony: "In the little bag that I gave into your hand upon my arrival are things that I value highly—a few ornaments, my savings-box, but especially letters from my earlier friend, which may perhaps be useful to me some day; also my mother's Bible, and things of that kind. I should not like to take that little bag with me into strange lodgings. With you I know it will be safe. Take care of it for me, and guard it as the apple of your eye! It is the most precious thing I own. Will you be sure to keep it safe for me?"

"You may rely upon that confidently."

Rose was perfectly satisfied. The reliability and trustworthiness of her friend had been proved.

A few weeks after Rose had won back perfect independence and freedom of movement, she formed an intimate relationship with a gentleman whom she had met at the theatre since she had come to Vienna.

This gentleman, who called himself Baron Ernest von Stoffow, looked very like an Hungarian or a Croat. He was a long, lean, lank man, with very dark complexion, and a coarse, shiny, black mustache; but, as Rose's ear taught her after he had spoken a few words, he was a fellow-countryman from North Germany. The bond of having a common country quickened their intimacy.

The pair had another common bond, of which neither was conscious. Baron Emmerich von Saza came, like Rose, from prison. He had accomplished his term of punishment only a few days before, and from Plötzensee had journeyed direct to Vienna, after tarrying only a few hours in Berlin for the purpose of gathering together and packing up his few effects. He still had some money, and was at no loss for a way of procuring more. He had ensconced himself in a good hotel, and had walked in there with all the assurance of a man of high standing. On the evening of the day when he met Rose, he engaged a chamber adjoining his for a niece, and next day drove up to the hotel, bringing this niece with him in a carriage. Upon the register the baron wrote, Baroness von Stoffow, of Stoffow, at Mohnengen.

Rose was by no means secure in her new friend. With her in-born fineness of intuition she immediately divined that all was not right in that quarter. She took occasion when the baron had gone out on business to rummage among his things, but found nothing to justify her suspicion. His trunks and wearing apparel were marked "E. v. S.," which tallied with the name borne by her friend. And many of the articles thus marked had evidently been in use for a long while. Nevertheless, she felt that she had to do with a doubtful sort of character, and must be on her guard to some degree.

This feeling she gave drastic expression to on her first visit to her friend Tony, remarking, with a smile: "My friend has been through tight places. I see that plainly. He is a fox that will be hard to catch."

As for the rest, Rose was of anything but an overanxious nature. She therefore did not let her hair grow gray over anything that the baron had done or was likely to do. Meanwhile, he saw after her, treated her well, made her little presents, and prepared her various gratifications. This was more than she had expected. It was all that she dared to expect.

And the baron actually concerned himself about her and did her services, of which she had the fullest appreciation. The baron had conceived a more than superficial fancy for the fresh, wide-awake girl, who united a crude mother-wit with great good-nature. She was utterly untutored. In her surroundings hitherto she had had no opportunity for acquiring familiarity with the usages of polite society. She talked just as she had a mind to, and her ways sometimes were not pretty; especially would her speech be very loud upon occasion, in order to win the approval of neighbors. She laughed boisterously, she gesticulated extravagantly, she ate in a distressing manner, carrying her knife to her mouth.

To all these and other points of ill-breeding the baron, by degrees, called her attention in a friendly manner. And Rose immediately perceived the justness of his admonitions. She took good heed to her ways, and felt pride in the continual progress that she was conscious to herself of making. She felt truly grateful to her patient instructor, and his apt, clever pupil's teachableness furnished him, too, with amusement.

Thus, for several months, this couple lived peaceably together, and a merry life they had of it. In spite of this, though, Rose never could rid herself of a certain sense of uneasiness and a feeling that she was treading upon unsafe ground. She had never been able to repose confidence in her baron. As to her recent adventures in Berlin, which she had gradually unfolded to her good Tony—of course, in her own way, figuring as persecuted innocence triumphantly cleared, and maintaining absolute silence so far as the contents of the hand-bag were concerned; but she had never been able to bring herself to breathe a word on the subject to the baron. Just as little was she aware of the causes that induced Baron Ernest von Stoffow to take up his residence in Vienna. Most assuredly he had not been called there by a press of business. He had evidently not much to do. In the course of the day, to be sure, he often went out, especially at noon; he also received and wrote a few letters—very rarely did visitors come, and he read the exchange-list with

attention—and that was all. As for the rest, he seemed to have money.

During the first months he had punctually paid his weekly bills, and made a good reputation among the servants by the generosity with which he feed them. Lately, however, he had seemed to be rather short of cash. Bills for the last three weeks had been lying, unpaid, on the marble consol under the mirror. And the baron occasionally got very low spirited and seemed to be disquieted.

And most assuredly he was so with good reason. He had joined in some speculations with a Viennese business friend of the firm Sparber & Sazer, dissolved meanwhile; and these ventures had at first brought large returns. He had shared in these profits. Now losses had ensued, and the baron made difficulties which excited his business friend no little.

Moreover, the baron one day had had an encounter which was as unexpected as it was disagreeable. On the Ring an elegant coupé had rolled by him, and as it did so he had recognized Prince Ulrich von Engernheim, sitting beside a blooming young lady, whose face was wreathed in smiles. The prince did not seem to have seen him; at all events, he had not noticed him. But to the baron this meeting was in a high degree unpleasant, the memory of the humiliating and insulting treatment to which he had been subjected that evening at Kroll's flashing upon him with the keenness of a lightning-stroke. He hated the prince, and dreaded, lest, in the prince, he should have an imbittered opponent, who might do him a bad turn by exposing his assumption of a false name, and render longer stay in Vienna impracticable.

To this uncomfortable state of mind were added the business troubles which had these last days been becoming more and more critical.

One afternoon a gentleman had himself announced whom the baron seemed compelled to receive well, although he was evidently an unwelcome visitor. He sent Rose to her room and had the bolt drawn. Rose was inquisitive, and put her ear to the key-hole. She could not, however, understand the tenor of their discourse. She could only perceive that the gentlemen spoke very roughly and used the word "swindler," and that the baron did everything that he could to soothe him. In this he finally succeeded, and the gentleman departed after remaining a short half-hour.

When the baron had again called Rose to come in, he said to himself, but so that Rose was obliged to hear: "One must endure everything for the sake of a good cause!"

To Rose's further questioning he replied by telling a very involved story, of which she understood nothing more than that the baron had some mysterious, important business to transact for a certain government, and that in the discharge of his duty he had to submit to all manner of aspersions.

"I am out of sorts," he continued, "the weather is fine, how would it do to make a little excursion to Semmering, or some such place? Let us take nothing but the mere necessities in a hand-bag, for we shall be back again to-morrow night."

Rose gladly yielded her consent. The few things needed for a trip of four-and-twenty hours were packed in a trice. The baron called a waiter, learned from him that the train for Semmering left in a half-hour, had a hack ordered and their traveling-bag brought down, and told the *portier* "for all emergencies" that he would be back in Vienna the next evening.

The pair had been sitting in a coupé for several hours. The ride was somewhat long for Rose. She had not thought that Semmering was nearly so far from Vienna. And another hour passed, and still another. It was already dusky.

"Shall we never get there?" asked Rose at last.

Then the baron, who had hitherto always comforted Rose, concluded to give her an explanation.

"We must journey farther. Semmering lies far behind us. Meanwhile we can not return to Vienna."

"What?" asked the highly surprised Rose, in a prolonged tone. "Not go back to Vienna?"

"You are a reasonable girl, and will understand me. They have found out that I have undertaken something important in the interest of a foreign power. They want to catch me. If I am caught my freedom is at stake and yours also, for you would probably be taken for a secret co-worker. Therefore, I had to flee."

"But my things! My cloak!" cried the horrified Rose.

"Don't disturb yourself, my dear! I'll make up to you double and treble what you have lost."

"My cloak! My cloak I must have!"

"Now, don't be childish! In Trieste we'll find more cloaks than you'll need."

"Ah, you do not know— I must have my cloak! It is abominable of you not to tell me of this before. If you knew—"

She could not finish her sentence, but sobbed and wept as if a heavy misfortune had overtaken her. The baron looked at her solicitously. He had not expected such an outburst upon the part of a girl usually so sensible. And all his arts of persuasion were in vain. Perpetually she went on lamenting over her cloak. What special interest could she take in that plain, common-looking cloak? It was a monomania on the part of the girl!

Rose wanted to get off at the next station, and to shriek for help if he hindered her. "I must go back to Vienna to fetch my cloak—"

"Then you will run right into the arms of the police force, will you? Very well, I have no objection to make. They will be sure to put you beyond the frontiers, and how you will fare in Berlin you'll see! If you plunge into misfortune on my account, I can not help it. But, at any rate, you have been warned. Now, Rose, will you be a good girl again?"

"If I only had my cloak! I would not be particular about the rest."

"Why are you always harping on your cloak? What is there so valuable in that cloak?"

"I will tell you! I have sewed up in it all my savings, to the amount of five hundred marks. Do you comprehend now?"

"That is certainly very unpleasant. But even that can be made up to you. And I promise you, Rose, that you shall not suffer loss through me. For the period just ahead it is likely that we shall need a great deal of money, and since I must, for a while, conceal myself, I do not know when I can have my money sent to me, but I can make you now a payment of a hundred florins on account. There, take them, my dear, and compose yourself!"

The baron took out his *porte-monnaie*, in which she saw a number of larger bank-notes, and taking out a hundred-florin bill, gave it to Rose.

This had effect. Up to this hour the baron had kept every promise made to Rose. She therefore calculated with certainty upon his reimbursing her for the five hundred marks, at which she had estimated her loss, and which, according to her valuation, paid well for the lace concealed inside her cloak-lining. Moreover, it was plain to her that the attempt to sell the lace could not be safely

made for years to come, and that even then it would expose her to gravest peril. Now she was warranted in expecting to receive the full value of it without incurring any personal risk; she need no longer travel around with that suspicious lace.

Certainly it was best so! She was rid of a perpetual source of uneasiness. They might do now whatever they chose with her old cloak in Vienna, and if that plagued lace should be dumped into the rag-mill along with the worn old cloak then the loudest witness to her share in the robbery—which otherwise could hardly be proved upon her—was put out of the world. Yes, it was best as it is!

Having thus consoled herself, she breathed more freely.

Her most valuable possession, the gold coins, had only slightly diminished, and the precious stones, which she meant to dispose of slowly, whenever she saw a favorable opportunity and could do so without incurring suspicion—her unpretending little hand-bag, with its precious contents, was safe in the hands of the trustworthy Tony. She was comforted and fell asleep, sleeping long and soundly, and had to be aroused next morning by the baron, since in a quarter of an hour the train would roll into the railroad station at Trieste.

At Trieste the pair put up at a hotel of the third class, where all they got was immediately paid for. There they remained forty-eight hours only, while the baron made some indispensable purchases. Rose assisted him in this task, and they were both speedily supplied with new and complete wardrobes, which were packed away in two much too large, heavy trunks, marked with the baronial coronet. Then they took passage on a steamer and proceeded to Venice.

In the Hotel de Ville, on the grand canal, the baron wrote on the register: "Baron Ernst von Saldis, with his niece Mademoiselle Rosine de Meauclair, from Belgium."

Rose was delighted with that glorious city; but a peculiar gratification was afforded her by that ennobling of her plebeian sounding German name by Frenchifying it. The metamorphosis of Moockel into Meauclair pleased her excessively, and she proposed to herself to adhere for the future to this agreeable variation. The same day she ordered visiting-cards from an engraver, upon which this new name was inscribed. She was in great haste to give this order, although the prospect indicated that it would be some while ere she could dare to make use of the cards.

A few days after his arrival in Venice the baron read, in a Vienna

newspaper, the news that a sharper, who called himself Baron von Stoffow, had embezzled a considerable amount of money from a Viennese house of business, and gone off in company with a young woman, whom he gave out to be his niece. Also, after for some time punctually paying his hotel bills, he had forgotten to settle the last considerable one in the hurry of departure, although, to be sure, he had left behind his own and his niece's baggage, whose value, all told, however, was far behind that of his debt.

The autumn was a wonderful one. But Mademoiselle Rosine de Meauclair had but little taste for the beauties of nature and art, and still less for the contemplation of monuments made venerable by historical associations.

She had become disgusted with her insecure existence by the side of the problematical baron. And then, for a long while he had not been so amiable as before, and no longer so generous either. For this he had good reason. Rose had accidentally inspected his pocketbook and convinced herself that, all told, he was the owner of no more than six hundred florins. Glory must come to an end, then, if the baron did not get a fresh supply of funds. And this now seemed a hard thing to compass. He wrote many letters, to be sure, but the answers that he received seemed to be anything but satisfactory. Superadded to all this, the baron of late had begun to evince jealousy.

In this he was justified. In the same measure as Baron von Saldis sank in the favor and confidence of Mademoiselle de Meauclair, a rich young merchant's son from Hamburg rose in her estimation.

This young man had been traveling for six months in Egypt and all over Italy, and for fourteen days had been tarrying in the city of lagoons on his way home by way of Munich and Berlin.

They had become acquainted in the hotel. Mr. Otter, who was about eight-and-twenty years old, was a very gallant man. Expeditions were made in common, gondola rides to the Lido—in short Mr. Otter soon made a third one in the party, and, in spite of the baron's earnest remonstrances, would always insist upon paying the reckoning himself alone.

Louis Otter was a cultivated and very amiable man, and of lively, enterprising disposition. It was on account of his wild pranks that his father had sent him off traveling in the not exactly justifiable hope that his son would return a more rational being.

Of course, Louis had immediately seen through the relationship existing between the baron and his niece, and his practiced eye had also immediately recognized the attractions of the certainly very pretty and charming niece. The conquest of this charmer was now his only thought. In spite of the baron's growing suspicion, he managed to effect a secret understanding with Rosine, who, for that matter, met him more than half-way. A perfect scheme was planned, and, in consequence of Rosine's peculiar talent for dissimulation, it succeeded to admiration.

Rosine had represented herself as ill, and stayed in the house all day. About eight o'clock in the evening she retired to rest, and begged her friend, if he should come home rather late, to make as little noise as possible, lest she be awakened when asleep. She shut herself up in her room. About ten o'clock she heard the baron come home. Long before this she had dressed herself again, and seated at the open window looked out with pleasing excitement upon the tranquil dark waters of the canal. From time to time she heard the plashing strokes of the oars and the loud shouts of the gondoliers at the entrances into the side canals. It was a still, warm evening in autumn, at the time of the new moon, and the mysterious city lay in deep darkness.

She held her breath, crept to the door of the next room, and listened. All was quiet. The baron seemed already to be asleep.

She returned to her observations at the window. The clock of St. Mark's struck half-past eleven.

Again was heard the splashing of water and the strokes of oars. A black gondola paused before the marble stairs leading to the hotel. Rosine waved her handkerchief out of the window, and then saw some white object fluttering at the same time below. She softly opened the door to the corridor, cautiously glided past the door of the next room, and one minute afterward was stepping into the gondola.

Louis had helped her in. The *portier* smiled a little.

"Yes, in Venice actually a peculiar breeze blows! That poor Baron von Saldis!" said he to himself, as the gondola pushed off.

About half-past twelve the train left Venice. This time Rosine had parted from her things without distress. She was only sorry to leave her beautiful big trunk. But Louis was just the man to make up to her for all losses. She was positive on that score, and she gauged him as well as she had gauged the baron before him.

Her new friend had inspired her with the fullest confidence. Here, without any doubt, were solid relations that could be relied upon.

From the style and manner of his address it had not taken her long to find out that Mr. Otter was a rich young man who dispensed his money generously.

Next morning, when the baron knocked at his niece's chamber-door, which she still kept persistently locked, he got no answer. He knocked louder. In vain. He now went into Rosine's room from the hall. The nest was empty, and the birds had flown. The trunk and purchases made in Trieste were all in place. The baron was greatly shocked. His first thought was of a disaster. The *portier*, however, soon quieted him on that point, communicating to him, and this time without a smile and maintaining his dignity, that Mademoiselle de Meauclair had been carried off last night, between half-past ten and eleven, in a gondola. Upon the baron questioning him further as to whether Mr. Otter had already gone out, the *portier* informed him that Mr. Otter had paid his bill and had his luggage carried to the railroad station early in the afternoon of the day before. In all probability that gentleman had left Venice by the fast train last night, and by this time was already at Bozen.

This information fully satisfied the baron. He likewise settled his account, and, in the course of the same morning, moved to a different hotel.

In the afternoon the two youthful travelers arrived safely and in the best of humors at Munich. Mr. Otter handed Mademoiselle de Meauclair a larger sum than she had had before wherewith to purchase a new outfit; and that young lady, who had acquired a certain cleverness in this respect, executed the commission quickly and well.

This time she signed her name in the registration-book as Rosina de Meauclair, and finished off her signature with a bold flourish. Also upon her beautiful new trunk, her underclothes, and everything that needed marking between the initials of her Christian and surname the little *de* was inserted. Her handkerchiefs even bore the coronet with a few points too many.

During the several weeks of their stay at Munich the young people amused themselves royally. They enjoyed each other's society hugely. Rosina really looked as pretty as a picture. Her deportment was faultless. She was always lively and in a good humor, and Louis Otter was proud of his conquest and of the envious

glances that were launched at him when he appeared at the theatre with Rosina. He heaped pretty presents upon her, which she gratefully accepted—fans, opera-glass, parasols, gloves—everything that kind Louis could think of he brought her.

Only one thing she denied herself in graceful fashion—she would accept of no jewelry, and this whim Mr. Otter amiably indulged her in. Indeed, she did not wear the smallest ornament, save a simple gold brooch at her throat—no ring, bracelet, or necklace—nothing of gold or precious stones, never anything but a few fresh flowers.

During these merry days Rosina, however, discharged one serious piece of business. She wrote to her Vienna friend, Mrs. Antoinette Tagmeier, told her the particulars of her good fortune, and finally requested her to send her hand-bag to her by express. Four days after the package ordered arrived in safety. Louis made no difficulty in paying the charges upon it, and, when he heard from Rosina that it held her Bible, a precious family memento, her blessed mother's present to her when she was confirmed—the dearest thing she had in the world—and that she had hidden in those stockings her little inheritance, he smiled, being touched, and gave her a beautiful fire-proof strong box large enough to hold her treasures safely. It gave him peculiar gratification to take this opportunity in a delicate manner of adding to his amiable young friend's modest capital a considerable sum in the form of shining gold coins, for which the strong-box offered so especially suitable a shrine.

Rosina was transported with joy. Apart from its golden contents, the iron chest was the sweetest and most useful present that she had ever received in her life before. She threw her arms around her considerate friend, and kissed him cordially.

Mr. Otter had seen many interesting things in his grand tour, and admired grand objects of beauty; but he had seen nowhere anything that he liked better than his own dear native land.

For Mr. Otter November by no means possessed that melancholy attributed by the poets to this step-child among the months.

In November he had returned to his family, and joy upon that occasion was great; but on the part of the elder gentleman this did not last too long. The brow of that worthy merchant became clouded. He had learned that his son Louis had brought back with him from his travels a young, very pretty, and fascinating companion, whom he had lodged in Bergedorf, and with whom he spent his evenings.

Mr. Otter the elder had a long explanation with his son as to the entire difference of customs and manners prevailing in the cold north and southern countries, which culminated in the positive requisition that this "person," as the old gentleman rather contemptuously designated Mademoiselle Rosina de Meauclair, should be sent away from Hamburg and its environs—sent far away, too. In case of non-compliance with this requisition, Mr. Louis Otter was threatened with such unpleasantnesses that thereby not merely his present position in life was threatened, but even his whole future. This was no joking matter, for, with all the elder Mr. Otter's devotion to his son and all his generosity in money matters, he was not a joking man.

With genuine tears of grief, Louis and Rosina parted.

What good did it do Rosina that her friend comforted her with the assurance that he would never allow her to suffer, and that she could always count upon him if she should be in want? What good did it do her that he placed at her disposal a sum sufficient to enable her to lead a life free from care for a year—yes, longer, if she managed properly? She had really become attached to her Louis during the four months of their living together. Not for anything would she go back to Berlin! She was imbibittered toward all Germany. She wanted to forget her woes in a foreign land.

Her Hamburg friend advised her to take up her future abode in London, so much the rather as he had to go to London on business at least two or three times a year; and in that great, huge city they could always manage to be together without being tormented by the impertinent curiosity of gossips. This exactly fell in with Rosina's views.

Louis gave his friend a few useful addresses, himself engaged a room for her, saw to it that she was met when the steamer came in, recommended her particularly to a friend, whom he dared to believe would not betray his confidence. Thus, early in December, he escorted Rosina on board ship.

Thereupon he informed his father that his advice had been followed, and the old gentleman responded by folding his good son in his arms with tender emotion.

Rosina de Meauclair, with wonderful rapidity, made herself at home in that monster of a city. She quickly established friendly relations with her hostess's daughter, a girl of about her own age, although intercourse between the two was rendered rather difficult,

at first, by the fact that one could not speak a word of German and the other not a word of English. Her hostess's daughter, Miss Arabella Parking, was a respectable girl, and, at present, Miss Rosina had no occasion to be otherwise. The baron and Louis Otter would no longer have succeeded in persuading her to join them in flight. Louis's friend, who assumed toward Rosina the demeanor of an uncle, sent the most satisfactory accounts of her to Hamburg.

After a few weeks the new friends could understand each other tolerably well, and, in the spring of 1881, Rosina spoke English, not correctly, it is true, but quite fluently. Now she took a teacher besides, and she who had been perfectly regardless of rule, so far as her native language was concerned, became almost *au fait* in English grammar.

The quiet monotony of family life, in time, naturally grew wearisome to her. The, alas! too infrequent visits of her good Louis did not satisfy perfectly the need she felt for diversion; but girls like Rosina always manage to put out their feelers in the right direction.

Besides Arabella, with whom she was still on the best of terms, she found another female friend, who lived in a neighboring house. The acquaintance had grown up quite naturally through repeated smiles made from window to window. Both were familiar with the international secret signs of the gallant guild. This neighbor, Miss Dora Draker, was one of the chorus at Her Majesty's Theatre—a lovely fresh blonde, of a disposition that gave her great *éclat* in the circle of men of pleasure about town.

Rosina and Dora found great pleasure in each other's society, and hardly a week passed that they did not spend one merry evening together in the kind of society they loved.

Rosina was now well enough pleased with the life she led. She knew that she was in the good graces of the Parking family, and when she found them a little too high-minded for her, she would look up Miss Dora, and in her company divert herself in a very different style. She had everything that she needed and no cares.

Moreover, she now entered upon a very serious occupation that she had recently devised—a charming, exciting occupation, which taxed her intelligence to its full extent, piqued her ingenuity, and filled her hours of leisure.

Rosina had been in London for about a year, and had seen

enough of that town to be satisfied that of all the inhabited globe there was not a spot so well fitted for disposing to advantage of "her" jewels and pearls.

Her heart palpitated, when, returning to her chamber, late one night—where she knew that she was perfectly free from observation—she took out of her trunk the heavy iron strong box, which had been locked up there all this while and set it on the table. She opened it and took out the old Bible which she had bought two years ago from the antiquary in Neue-Königstrasse, for seventy-five pfennige.

Only two years! Actually only two years!

She shook her head. It seemed to her an eternity!

And yet now, again, as she held the old book in her hand, and felt a certain shyness about opening it—it seemed to her as though it had happened yesterday, just yesterday! In bodily presence she saw Wildicke sitting there before her, how with his powerful fist he inserted his jack-knife and pressed down upon it his full weight. She could here the creaking of the table, could see herself, her full, bare arms—there had been a fascination about it, in spite of all the trouble and all that!

She unclasped the book. The paper case was uninjured.

With the ball of her right hand she pressed through the upper sides which had been pasted up, and then tore a hole sufficiently large to admit of shaking out the little packet that she had made up herself. And engaged as she was in a business so nefarious, she experienced a sensation akin to awe.

She carefully undid the wrappings that incased the gems and pearls, laid aside the papers, and arranged her treasures. She counted forty-one precious stones, thirty-one pearls. Everything was in place. And then, as she had that other time, she took up first one and then another of the finest diamonds and sapphires, breathed upon them, let them glitter beneath the lamp, and rejoiced over their fiery radiance. Finally she laid these costly jewels in the plush *étui* of her opera-glass and locked up everything again in the strong box, including the Bible, now become superfluous, and looking on unresistingly at the loss of its involuntary trust. The little papers she threw into the fire.

The next day she entered upon the occupation that kept her constantly busy during the following months. It occurred to her that it would be judicious, in the prosecution of her calling,

for her to appear in mourning. She therefore communicated to the sympathetic ears of the Parking family tidings of the melancholy decease of her aunt the Baroness von Stoffow, whom she dearly loved, and proceeded to have a complete suit of handsome mourning made up by a stylish dressmaker. Simultaneously she took the initiative in her business.

Carrying with her a few of the precious stones, she repaired to a prominent jeweler. Following the merchant's advice she had them set simply as a bracelet. She insisted upon the setting being as plain as possible. She hated a vulgar display of gold, she only wanted to enhance the value of the stones! The jeweler understood her, for indeed the stones were of extraordinary beauty. Prolonging the conversation she acquainted herself with their approximate value.

After the lapse of eight days she dared to go for the work. She was pleased with its execution, paid for it, and left.

This time she was in deep mourning. She went by rail to another quarter of the city, sought for and found there another jeweler.

To him she told how she had inherited from a dear relation a very beautiful bracelet that she would very much like to sell. The jeweler tested the stones, recognized the setting as the work of a first-class London goldsmith, and offered a price corresponding about with the valuation set upon it by his colleague. The lady gave her name as Baroness von Stoffow, together with her address—a perfectly unexceptionable address. There was an air of nobility about her, she was elegantly clothed, her manner was quiet and assured. There was not the slightest reason to suspect the seller; the article for sale was perfect, and the lady took her leave with a slight inclination of the head.

Rosina returned home richer by eighty pounds than she had gone forth.

In a manner similar, only with countless variations as to particulars, she gradually changed into clinking coin the pearls and precious stones which had formerly belonged to the Countess Juliane von Iseneck.

In the main features the manipulation was always identical. She would have the jewels plainly set in one quarter of the city and dispose of them in another, and from the first jeweler she always found out what the other one ought to pay for them. She kept an

exact account of all her business transactions. The expenses of the setting were not taken into the reckoning, being considered as a mere tax upon the trade. All wound off as smoothly as possible without a single tangle, and in the most unobtrusive manner.

In the course of ten months she had in this way entered into negotiations with sixteen jewelers of that colossal city, who often lived miles apart from one another. Altogether a capital of three thousand pounds sterling had been amassed in this way, and moreover a number of great goldsmiths helped forward in their business.

When the last of these bargains had been consummated; when she had counted over the clean notes on the Bank of England in her possession, and convinced herself that from the proceeds of her jewelry trade, and the contributions of her faithful friend Louis Otter she owned a fortune of seventy thousand marks; when, moreover, she represented to herself that she had nothing more to conceal, that every real witness to her complicity in the Wilhelmstrasse robbery had been disposed of, that the cloak with the "Lamoral" lace was being eaten by moths somewhere in Vienna, and the pearls and precious stones, scattered all over London, in all manner of settings, and thence, may be, had traveled into every corner of the globe—then there came over her a strong, irresistible longing to go back home.

Often before this desire had come over her in strength, but the dread of dangers that she might incur had stifled it.

Her great success in London gave her a comfortable feeling of security. Two years and a half had elapsed since she had set out from the Anhalter Bahnhof to visit her good Tony in Vienna. Who concerned himself now about the burglary in palace Iseneck and about the Rose Moockel who had been discharged as innocent?

And she was a veritable Berlin woman, who could live, breathe, and really enjoy existence in Berlin only.

It had been very gay in Vienna, and lovely in Venice. She had never laughed more in her life than when in Munich, and never felt better satisfied than at that little Bergedorf. She had got along very well even in the benumbing grandeur of London. All this had been well enough; but grand, gay, and beautiful as had been all these cities whither the whimsicality of fate had led her, they were, nevertheless, different from Berlin, and she wanted to have things just as they were in Berlin—as dusty and orderly, as loud and well

regulated, as plain sailing and sociable—so indescribable, so *Berlinerisch*!

She longed once more to see even a guardsman, out of whose way, in the wild days of her youth, she would have gone with a wide curve, and the bold flower-venders and match-girls at the corner of the Linden. She longed once more to hear a pert remark from a street boy in the unadulterated dialect of her dear native place; to carry on a confidential talk with some old, unshaven, second-class drosky-driver, and to be jolting, at a jog-trot, over the faulty pavements of the remote quarters. She longed for the dust of Under den Zelten, and a mug of foaming beer wherewith to wash it down. In short, she was home-sick.

In October, 1882, she declared to the really distressed Parking family that she must return to Germany. Arabella shed burning tears. Miss Dora Draker, too, was very sorrowful upon losing so good a friend who had never been a marplot.

The preparations for departure were all made; and on the last of October Rosine de Meauclair, after a very affectionate leave-taking of her London friends, male and female, upon whom she had made the most pleasing impression, bade farewell to the green shores of England.

Rosine de Meauclair alighted at one of the hotels on the Linden. She was overjoyed at being in Berlin again, without being able to explain even to herself why she felt so happy.

She lived in great privacy at the hotel, being wholly absorbed in making a new home for herself. In Krausenstrasse, hard by Dönhof Square, she found a suitable abode, consisting of four rooms and appurtenances, which she furnished neatly and comfortably, with great care, circumspection, and good taste. And on January 1, 1883, she took possession of her new realm. Meanwhile she had hired only a cook, who was also to aid her in the housekeeping. For the coarser work every morning there came a woman from outside, and Rosine herself took pleasure in helping with her own hands to keep her pretty new establishment in order.

Astonishing as had been Berlin's towering growth during the last ten years as the capital of the German Empire, in many respects it had not yet been able to appropriate to itself the character of a metropolis.

The looming up of a lady like Rosine de Meauclair, which in London had attracted the particular attention of not a single creat-

ure, in Berlin very soon excited no little stir in those circles for whom such apparitions possess some interest. The young gentlemen of the club and Exchange, and also older, well-to-do bachelors, men of pleasure, and married men, too, for that matter, soon knew that on Dönhof Square a lady had taken up her abode who was very graceful and elegant in her manners, besides having received a fine education; for she spoke both German and English fluently, although evidently she was of French origin, as her name showed. It was known, moreover, that this lady's house was furnished very handsomely, and that she was the owner of an independent fortune. Already the names of several were mentioned who had succeeded in making the acquaintance of this evidently rather exclusive lady. She had, moreover, accepted an invitation to a small entertainment, in which several young artists participated, and charmed everybody by the grace and nobility of her mien.

Rosine de Meauclair now moved in circles where a Rose Moockel had never been heard of, and there she felt herself perfectly at ease.

She was also fortunate enough to make the acquaintance of a gentleman well versed in affairs on "Change," who esteemed himself happy in being allowed to do a favor for his fascinating friend, by investing the sixty thousand marks, which she transmitted to him in English notes, in good securities bringing high interest. He represented that he would take great pleasure in giving her any information concerning questions of finance, and in the course of the succeeding weeks offered his charming lady friend a share in some profitable investments for which opportunity was presented in the Exchange, in which loss could not possibly be incurred, and from which a handsome sum might be won. Rosine de Meauclair, who was not devoid of the money-loving propensity, had no objection whatever to urge against enterprises of the sort.

Through the studied simplicity of her tasteful toilets and the entire absence of finery; through her reserved demeanor, the repose and grace of her measured movements; through her soft speech—in a word, through her unobtrusiveness, Rosine was diametrically the opposite of those ladies to whom she had looked up, in her younger days, as ideals hardly attainable, and whom she now simply ignored.

There was something uncommonly interesting, almost child-like, in her whole appearance, and it came to pass that young girls drew the attention of their mothers to that lovely lady, and asked

who she could be, whereupon their mothers would survey the lady through their opera-glasses, share their innocent daughters' opinion, and without embarrassment answer their question thus: "Yes, indeed, a charming lady! In any case, a foreigner."

Such was the Mademoiselle de Meauclair whom Bertha Schmider set off to visit one fine day in June.

CHAPTER III.

"GREEK MEETS GREEK."

BERTHA SCHMIDER had not met Rose Moockel more than half a dozen times all told. It had been almost four years since the time when, with Wildicke and Hotte, the burglary in the Iseneck palace had been talked about and planned. The next time that she had beheld Wildicke's *inamorata* it was on the prisoner's bench. And now three years had flown by since that time!

She remembered Rose as an insignificant, commonplace sort of girl, who never took any share in the conversation, but continually wore an unmeaning smile—as a fresh, somewhat coarse, countrified person with awkward movements. This impression of her being awkward, helpless, and silly had been confirmed by Rose's deportment at the trial.

Bertha felt herself to be infinitely superior to this plump, ye-nay lass, and planned to make this superiority clearly felt from the very first. She set it before herself to overpower Rose as well by the outward effect of her stylish exterior as by the preponderance of her intellectual gifts, in order afterward to impose upon the conquered her own terms for a treaty of peace.

Bertha was not minded to let herself be put off by a pitiful present. She rather hankered after the lion's share of the booty, of which she was confident that there must be a considerable portion still available, from the accounts that had been given to her.

Bertha accordingly paid particular attention to her toilet. She put on her finest summer dress, donned her most dressy hat, drew on a pair of quite new Swedish gloves, topping all with her new parasol. She looked at herself in the glass and was satisfied with what she saw. Her appearance was, indeed, calculated to make a

very favorable impression, and there was hardly a girl in her rank of life who could have stood a comparison with her.

With a light step, and yet not too hurriedly, she repaired to the apartments designated, in quiet consciousness of an easy victory about to be won.

The only point on which she was not quite clear was as to whether she should make a forcible attack at once, and fell her artless and unsuspecting opponent at a blow, or proceed in a diplomatic manner to worm herself into the confidence of that simple person, entice her into a confession, and then avail herself of her advantageous position. Her decision as to whether she should use force or artifice would depend upon Rose's deportment.

A mocking laugh played about her thin lips when she read, upon the brass door-plate on the second story, the name "Rosina de Meauclair."

She rang.

To the maid opening the door she said, with cool dignity, "Will you let your young lady know that Miss Bertha Schmider has called upon her?"

The girl returned directly and invited the visitor to walk in.

Bertha was somewhat surprised to find herself in a small parlor very prettily and tastefully furnished, not at all such an environment as agreed with her conception of the owner's personality.

But she was actually speechless from astonishment when, immediately afterward, the door opened and a beautiful, very elegant-looking young lady entered, in a cream-colored morning-gown with cream-colored plush trimmings, who with a winning smile held out to her in greeting a plump, well-tended white hand.

Did she really see with a waking eye that same Rose Moockel before her who had sat staring at Wildicke with half-open mouth, perpetually smiling at his clever sayings, without at all understanding them?

Rose had become more slender, and seemed to have grown taller, had beautified herself altogether, and she betrayed not the least embarrassment at the meeting.

Bertha was greatly disconcerted.

"Fräulein Bertha," said Rosina to her visitor, "this is a surprise! A pleasant surprise! How have you learned— But never mind that! The first thing to be done is to sit down and tell me how the world has fared with you."

"Tolerably, Fräulein Rose—"

"Hush!" whispered Rose, smiling roguishly, as she laid her forefinger to her lips. "Fräulein Rosina, if you please. I have completely broken with Rose. I'll tell you about it by-and-by. So you are getting along well. I am delighted to hear it."

"I did not say well; hardly tolerably. At all events, not so well as you."

"Yes, thank God, I have no reason to complain."

"Now, Fräulein Rosina, I have seen hard times."

"Yes, Fräulein Bertha, I can well imagine it."

"And I have nobody to thank for it but your Wildicke."

"Oh, he has long ceased to be my Wildicke. But I will not say anything bad about him; that would be mean in me. To me he was always good."

"God knows it!" resumed Bertha, with bitterness. "And nobody has had to suffer more severely for it than I."

"How so?"

Bertha looked around.

"Does nobody hear us?"

"Not a creature," said Rosina, soothingly. "Speak at your ease."

"Well, Fräulein Rose—excuse me, but the question is now about the Rose of other days—you observed how Wildicke rolled all the blame off on me, in order to screen you."

"Screen me!" repeated Rosina, smiling. "You are mistaken. He needed not to have exerted himself on my account. He had nothing to do but to speak the truth. And that is what he did. I had not the least thing to do with the matter, and was merely drawn into it by my silly good-nature."

"Fräulein, why act such a farce before me? We both knew all about the thing."

"It really does not seem to me that you know what you are talking about. I am acting no farce, I am simply telling the truth."

"And of all the things that Wildicke gave you, is nothing left?"

"That I do not know. Perhaps it is all there still. Curiosity to inquire into it was killed out in me, for very good reasons, as you will say yourself. What Wildicke handed me I took to Mehnerstrasse that night. That is all I know of what is left. And for my stupidity I had to sit in prison for a whole quarter of a year, undergoing examinations, until finally justice was done me."

"Did you take *everything* to Mehnerstrasse?" asked Bertha, with emphasis.

"Of course, I did," returned Rosina, simply.

"And what has become of the money?"

"Of what money?"

"That which Freeder paid you."

"Not a mark did he pay me. That was a matter which Freeder had to settle with Wildicke, and ere this was done Wildicke was put in prison."

"It is not pretty of you, Fräulein," continued Bertha, in an altered tone that was full of reproach, "to try and impose like this upon an old friend who has had such a hard penalty to pay. If I were in your place I would act differently. I should never know a quiet hour if I had to say to myself that I alone have reaped all the profit, and overreached an unhappy friend who has been languishing in prison for three years. Unrighteously gotten wealth never prospers, Fräulein Rose. And it will cost you pain some day. Yes, your conscience will surely smite you for treating me so. I have not deserved this of you."

Bertha had stirred her own feelings, and the tears came into her eyes. With this emotion, however, was united a feeling of vexation and disillusion as to the entirely altered relationship in which the two stood to each other. She had firmly persuaded herself that she could readily twist Rose around her little finger, and here she sat in presence of a lady fully her equal, at least intellectually, and outwardly her superior, and whose quiet and dignified deportment forced her in spite of herself into an attitude of inferiority.

"My dear girl," said Rosina, sympathetically, "you are very much excited, and I do not take your expressions in ill part. From anybody else I would consider them insulting, and would not stay quiet as I do. But, indeed, you are entirely mistaken. I have already told you the advantage I reaped from that affair—nothing but three months' confinement at police headquarters. That is *all*. And you do not hanker after a share in that, do you? Fate has made up to me for the undeserved punishment inflicted upon me, an innocent girl. I have had good luck. I became acquainted with a fine man, who took me up, and I have to thank him alone for what I am and what I have. I am not rich—anything else—but I have enough to save me from any anxiety as to the near future. And when I get through what I have I think I know where I can

apply for help. Now you know everything, Fräulein Bertha. When a poor girl I used to share my last morsel with my female friends, and fortune has not treated me badly. I have never forsaken a friend in need, and, if you are in want, tell me so. As I said before, I have not much, and must exercise economy; but I can always help you over the worst places."

Therefore no share in winnings, but an alms it was that Rosina generously offered to dispense to the afflicted. It revolted Bertha's pride, but, at the same time, avarice was stirring within her. She did not believe a word that Rose said. She only did not know how to get at her.

"No," answered Bertha, with dignity. "I am not so badly off as you imagine, Fräulein. I am not in a starving condition, and the few marks that you could lend me would be of no service to me whatever."

"An idea!" cried Rosina, "perhaps a good idea! At all events, we could try it. Come and live with me, Fräulein Bertha. I hope we can get along together—"

Bertha looked up in astonishment.

"I have been looking out for a companion for a long while—"

Bertha raised her head and laughed. She, Bertha Schmider, in the service of a Rose Moockel! It could not be seriously meant.

"A lady with whom I can go out—one who can accompany me to the theatre," continued Rosina, with no embarrassment whatever—"a female friend. I had thought of getting a French woman. It exalts one. People are so stupid nowadays, but one has to take them as one finds them. But you, Fräulein Bertha, would suit me. Your appearance is good, and you behave with propriety. I would pay you a respectable salary. We would take our meals together. In the eyes of the world you would be my friend, or a cousin or a sister, as you choose. Bertha de Meauclair does not sound so badly, does it? We can consider about that. Through me you would have access to the best society. You are pretty, young, and distinguished looking. You, too, perhaps would make your fortune."

While Rosina thus spoke her offer had gradually lost the character of the impossible and ridiculous.

"We can talk over it," she answered, slowly, while she looked down and with the tip-end of her parasol described the Oriental pattern of the carpet.

Now, indeed, the most favorable opportunity was offered her of

insinuating herself into an intimacy with Rose, winning her confidence, and surprising her secret. And she must succeed in this. It was impossible that Rose could have been so completely transformed.

If Bertha became more intimate with her she could surely see through her little artifices, and get even with her. And evidently here there could be no talk of the relation between mistress and maid existing. That artless Rose was very artless to open her sheep-cote to the wolf. She depreciated mightily the former friend of Johann Hotte. Finally, unexpected things might come to pass; perhaps even such as Rose forecast. For why should not a Bertha Schmider make her fortune as well as a Rose Mooockel?

"We can try it, at all events. If we do not get along well together, we can just sever the connection, and there's no harm done," wound up Rosina.

"Well, then, Fräulein, we'll try it."

"Done! And from what time?"

"I'll come to you on the first of July."

"As a friend or relation? It is all one to me."

"As a cousin."

"Then we must say thee and thou. It is so much more pleasant to me, too. Then, on the first of July, you move here. You shall have a pretty room of your own. As to all the rest, we understand each other already."

"Certainly we do. Shall we meet between this and then?"

"Of course. You'll find me almost always at home. I hardly ever go out in the day-time."

Bertha got up to go.

When she represented to herself the ends which she had had in view when she looked up Rose Mooockel, and the result of her interview with Rosina de Meauclair, she could not help being struck with the comicality of the situation, and had to laugh.

Rosina, too, had risen to her feet. She good-naturedly offered Bertha her hand; but there was a certain dignified reserve in this good-nature which excited Bertha's admiring wonder afresh.

"I am astonished," said she, while she slowly moved toward the door, "how you have risen. You are really like a different creature."

"Ah! indeed?" returned Rosina, with a gratified smile. "That pleases me! I have come to that conclusion myself, but it delights

me to have you tell me so. There is something of the monkey about me, and I have simply imitated what I have seen around me. It is like a second nature to me now, and I can hardly imagine how people behave any other way."

With another pressure of the hand the two parted.

After Bertha had closed the door, Rosina slyly winked her left eye, and said :

"You expect to be made wise, my pet, but, if you want to catch me, you will have to get up a little earlier in the morning. Last as well as first, I am as sly as you are. Just spy upon me as much as you like ; there is little that you'll find out. And there is no better way of getting rid of you than our living together!"

Bertha, too, had no real confidence in the duration of the connection between herself and Rosina. She told Frau Mainhardt and Theodore a very mixed-up story, of which nobody could make "head or tail"; the transactions with Rose Moockel were bound to be prolonged. Meanwhile she had obtained with a noble French woman a very lucrative position, upon which she was to enter the first of July; the lady, however, was described to her as very capricious, and hence it might be— In short, the plain sense of her long and bewildering narrative was this: Bertha had to leave them on the first of July, but may be would come back to them again.

Frau Mainhardt and especially Theodore were very sorry to see Fräulein Bertha depart. Theodore was quite dejected.

The relations between the two cousins for the first few weeks were as agreeable as could be desired. Bertha, however, had to acknowledge to herself that she had not advanced by so much as a finger's breadth into Rosina's confidence. She did not feel a whit nearer to her than she had at their first interview, and acknowledged to herself that she had reckoned without her host when she calculated upon surprising her secret in some happy hour of unguarded interchange of thought.

It was manifest that she had greatly undervalued the girl's capacity, and made a fundamental error in supposing that it would be an easy thing to get the whip hand of Rosina. There was no talk of that now. Rosina was friendly, it is true—but only exactly to that point which suited her, and not a step further. And she had an obliging way of having her own will carried out, against which Bertha was defenseless.

Involuntarily and reluctantly Bertha obeyed, and if too late a

clear consciousness of this came to her, she worried over her weakness and vacillation of purpose. Why she had not been more submissive to the Countess von Iseneck herself! It was unheard of, to let herself be ordered about by this person!

These thoughts were passing through her head one day when she had a commission to execute for Rosina. She was really letting herself be ordered around like a real chambermaid.

Purposely she lingered and paused before one shop and another. Fräulein Rose must learn to wait; and if she undertook to make a remark about it, then it would be time to give warning and quit.

She stood before a show-window that was lined with placards from top to bottom. The shelf was entirely covered with newspapers. On all the placards was the same thing—

"THE ADVOCATE—THE JOURNAL OF THE OPPRESSED"

—in gigantic capitals, and below, in smaller letters on the left side: "Equal Rights for All!" and to the right: "Mene, Tekel, Upharsin!" In the middle was a coarse wood-cut—a fist tearing a mask off a face, and in a mirror the picture of this hideous, grinning face.

Over the papers on the window-shelf were spread out posters printed in glaring colors and with striking titles: "The Secrets of the Council of Commerce," "How the Young Count came by an Old Wife," "The Brothers of an Officer of High Rank," "Asmodeus in Wilhelmstrasse," and the like—the very engaging headings to the peculiarly thrilling articles in this sheet, which had only been in existence for a few weeks, and yet had already made for itself a reputation of a peculiar sort.

Bertha observed all this without any special sympathy.

Then out of the door to this house came a very tall, thin gentleman, with a big black mustache under his huge nose, and Bertha gave an involuntary start of surprise. The gentleman bestowed a glance upon her.

"Good-day, baron. Perhaps you do not recognize me?"

"Wait, wait!" returned the thin man, with an embarrassed smile, while, at the same time, he lifted his hat. "I don't know exactly, just at this moment."

"You do not recognize me. And it is perfectly natural. Ten years, indeed, have passed since we met. But you have hardly altered at all. I was in your wife's service—Bertha."

"Fräulein Bertha!" exclaimed Baron von Saza, in joyful sur-

prise. "Of course, though! I beg your pardon, people don't forget so easily— Candidly, I'm truly delighted to see you again. Do you know that you have grown much prettier?"

"Oh, baron!"

"Yes, really, you have, *Fräulein Bertha*—much prettier. We then parted on bad terms; but I hope that has been forgotten a long time ago."

"Why dear me, I was a mere child, then."

"And now you have turned out a fascinating young lady. What are you doing now? But we can make ourselves more comfortable, if we want to enjoy a little sociable chat together. I am in no hurry. Have you time?"

"I am in no great haste, either."

"Well, then, pray step in. I have my office in this house." The baron pointed with his hand to the open house-door. Straight ahead, if you please. On the court to the left—the first door."

Bertha entered a room with but one window that looked anything but attractive. At the window stood a large desk of most ordinary workmanship, with a lid on which were laid out various books of reference. The table was covered with manuscripts and newspapers, this and that being marked, and here and there a piece clipped out. Hard by the table was a scrap-basket, almost filled with torn letters, envelopes, and bits of newspaper. Sheets of paper of all sorts lay on the floor. Against the wall, likewise, stood a book-case, on the shelves of which more newspapers were arranged. Besides, there was in this small room another middle-sized table covered with oil-cloth, on which stood a flask of water, a tumbler turned up by its side, a candle, a match-box, and a pint-jug of beer, three quarters empty. Four cane-bottomed chairs completed the furniture of this tasteless and unattractive apartment.

"We are in my editorial sanctum," explained the baron. "It is not a very handsome one, but at all events we can talk here ever so much better than out on the street. Here we shall not be disturbed, to say the least. But for prudence sake I will shut the doors. In the next room my colleague is at work, the man of business."

As he thus spoke, he pushed the bolt on the front of the door leading into the adjoining room, and also closed the door opening upon the corridor.

"And now," continued he, while he backed a chair against the

table, in the immediate neighborhood of his working-chair, "seat yourself, dear Fräulein Bertha, and tell me something."

He had sat down also, and seized Bertha's hand with his right, while he affectionately patted it with his left hand.

"Now, then, are you in service? Or are you married?"

"I am, at present, companion to a French woman; but I don't think that I shall stay there long. I like clear relations, and there is many a thing not clear there."

"A girl like you will find no trouble in getting a good place. I tell you again, you have grown ever so much prettier."

"But, baron—"

The baron had stooped forward so far that their heads almost touched. Bertha, smiling, cast down her eyes.

"I am in earnest. And if you leave that French woman, perhaps I can recommend something better fitted for you. A right good place, Fräulein Bertha," added he, with a smirk and muffled voice, "at the house of a middle-aged gentleman, who, for a long while, has been looking out for a lady to take charge of his establishment, and in some sort represent the lady of the house. You would be well, very well treated, Fräulein Bertha, and satisfied with everything else. Well, now, what think you of it?"

"Ah, baron, I do not know what I am to think of all this. You knew me of old, and know—"

Bertha did well to revive in him the memory of other days. For this memory was the very thing that had tickled Baron von Saza when he had thus suddenly come across Bertha Schmider. He thought, with a certain complacency, of the opposition upon which he had stumbled that time, how the young girl had then modestly repelled his advances, and finally fled from them, and it pleased him now to renew his suit with a prospect of a more successful issue. Bertha had certainly grown older. She could no longer be far from the line that crosses the thirties. But she was still a blooming girl, less pretty than piquant, with finely cut features, thin lips, and wavy, dark-brown hair, and with remarkable clear gray eyes, which looked around knowingly and at times shone marvelously.

"Just because I know you—just because I know how you are—for that very reason I would like to get the place for you," continued the baron, while he clasped her hand more firmly between both of his hands and slowly swung it. "Why should you let yourself be bulldozed by a whimsical French woman? In my establishment

you will be first, and it will please you very well. I have quite a nice residence near by in Charlottenstrasse. You can look at it whenever it is convenient for you to do so. As I said before, I believe it will please you."

"We can talk over this another time, baron," said Bertha, as she always did when she had made up her mind to do a certain thing, but from some reason or other did not want her decision to be known yet a while.

"Meanwhile, I have a home with my French woman."

"So be it, Fräulein Bertha! I am not as impatient as a child, and comprehend how you should like to think over the matter. But let me know your decision very soon, please. I want you to see my house first. If you come to me as lady manager of the establishment there would be a great deal to see to. I am just keeping bachelor's hall now. And I should like to have everything to your taste. And that would take a little time. Once more, then, think over it. I would be delighted if I could engage you. From Sunday till Wednesday you will find me at home until toward four o'clock. In the last days of the week I have to make up my paper. Then I go out earlier."

"You publish a paper, I believe, baron?"

Saza smiled, and twirled his black mustache.

"A much read, much dreaded paper," replied he, self-complacently. "Have you not read it, then? 'The Advocate!' I tell you, but that paper makes an immense sensation! We go unsparingly against everything that oppresses poor people, against anybody, without respect of persons. We fearlessly lay bare the cancers and plague-spots of our rotten society. Anybody can get audience of us who has any complaint to make of mean treatment on the part of the great. If your shoe ever pinches you, if you ever want to expose somebody, just come to me. You will have no cause to rue it. Precisely from the circle of ladies' maids and companions have we got the richest revelations, that we furbish out and dress off to serve as sensational articles for the delectation of our readers. There is no go without scandal nowadays, Fräulein Bertha. And if nothing scandalous happens, the scandal must be forthcoming, all the same. And if you know an exciting little tale," said he, somewhat softly, "either about your French woman or some one of your former mistresses, then only tell it to me! Our regular editor, an unmitigated rascal, whom my partner has scared up, has

a half-dozen lawsuits hanging over him already. But these are just the costs of doing business. And a penalty of three hundred marks can be spared from a profit of one thousand marks gained by the insertion."

"But can not they get a hold on you?" asked Bertha, with some anxiety. She again felt some scruples about entering into the service of a man who was on a war-footing with the authorities. Like a burned child she dreaded the fire.

"Impossible!" responded Saza, with tranquillity of soul. My name has never yet been in the paper. My manuscripts are destroyed as soon as put in type. In order to work effectively, I have to keep in the dark. In my partner I have an experienced legal adviser. This is not the first time that he has been employed on a sheet of the kind. He knows all sly—"

"I have a horror of the police, though. They learn everything!"

"Oh no!" smiled Saza, with calm superiority. "They do not learn everything by a great deal! Believe me."

Both thought of the experiences which they had gone through. Bertha had a sensation of discomfort. She had again begun to waver in her resolve to adopt a new mode of life by the baron's side. She did not want to have anything to do with the police. She slowly arose from her seat.

"I believe it is time now that I took my leave," said she. "My lady will be wondering at my staying away so long."

"Let her wonder! If she is dissatisfied let her look out for another companion. You know where to look for maintenance."

"But indeed I must go now."

"And you'll call on me within the next few days?"

"If you'll allow me, baron."

"I even count upon it. Remember, from Monday until Wednesday daily, until four."

"Very well, baron."

They had neared the front door. The baron again held out his hand to Bertha, and as she laid hers in his proffered right hand, and looked at him smilingly, her light eye had again that shrewd, peculiar expression which had formerly attracted him to the girl so strangely. And a feeling dating from a period long past came over him; he embraced Bertha and kissed her. Bertha, to be sure, frowned a little and turned away her head somewhat, but the repulse was evidently not an earnest one.

"Not yet, baron," whispered she. "The people over yonder might see through the window. And positively I must be going—"

"But you'll come to see me soon? And surely?"

"Surely and certainly."

With a pretty pout Bertha extricated herself from his repeated embraces and took a hasty farewell. She had been in no haste about her commissions. Many a thing was buzzing through her brain.

"But where have you been staying this long while?" asked Rosina, when Bertha at last got home. "I have been waiting for you this hour."

"I had something of my own to attend to," answered Bertha, with all imaginable indifference.

"Then you should have had the consideration to tell me so."

"Why so?"

"Because it is proper, and because that is my wish."

"You speak to me in a tone that I'll stand from nobody, but from you least of all."

"Then I can only give you the good advice to look out somebody whose tone suits you better, for I shall not alter mine toward you!"

"With great pleasure, indeed, Fräulein Moochel. I have only been watching for the moment when you would give me up. No respectable girl is suited to an establishment such as yours."

"You will not succeed in arousing my temper, unwedded Dame Hotte!" answered Rosina, with a quiet smile, turning her back upon her at the same time.

Bertha was boiling over with rage. But she deemed it beneath her dignity to enter into a controversy with such a person. She went to her room, packed up her things, had them brought down by a porter, whom she ordered also to call a drosky, and left the house without a word of farewell.

She drove back to the Mainhardts', and was very kindly received there. She again told a very remarkable story about her adventure in the house of an unbearable French woman.

Meanwhile she dared not even think of accepting Baron von Saza's offer. She was afraid of imperiling her position in the family by throwing herself on the baron's neck, so to speak. And, moreover, she hesitated on her own account as to whether she should

risk it with the baron. The impression that he made was little calculated to inspire confidence.

Over and above this, she was quite independent of him. She still had some money, and, even if it should give out, good Countess von Iseneck would fill her purse again. However, as a prudent woman she was not going to wait until the last minute.

On the very next day, then, she indited a new epistle to that excellent lady couched in humblest terms. She grounded her request for the further loan of only four hundred marks upon a whole series of telling arguments.

When this communication was handed to Juliane she was in a different mood from what she had been the first time. She had slept badly the night before, and was greatly irritated and excited. In a fit of violent indignation she had shattered a glass. All day long Ida had cautiously kept out of her way, and the thin young man with the polished spectacles, who had been the bearer of the letter, had to coax her a great deal before he could induce her to hand it to her lady.

Tremblingly Ida carried the letter into the park chamber, which the countess was pacing with hasty steps.

"What do you want?" brusquely asked Juliane of the girl.

"A letter, most honorable lady."

"I will not read any letter."

"The bearer of the letter was very urgent indeed. He said that he knew your ladyship would be glad to read the letter."

Juliane took the letter, opened it, glanced over it, and tore it into pieces.

"There is no answer," said she, curtly; and upon Ida's tarrying a little, she called out, in a harsh tone: "Didn't you understand? There is no answer."

Ida withdrew in silence and delivered her message to the young man.

When Theodore Mainhardt conveyed this answer to Bertha she turned pale. She had once more repeated to her the answer that sounded to her so improbable. Then she forced herself to smile calmly, and said: "The countess must be ill. She will answer my next letter. I am much obliged to you, Mr. Mainhardt."

She was alone in her own little room. There she tossed back her head, and her bright eyes flashed threateningly.

"Aha, madame countess!" she exclaimed, while her face re-

gained its color. "You'll not get rid of me at that cheap price! I know already what I have to do."

And she thought of Baron Emmerich von Saza, the proprietor and head editor of the "journal for the oppressed," "The Advocate."

"Mene, Tekel, Upharsin."

Bertha did not know what these words meant, but the thoughts that passed through her brain were exactly the same as if she had fully comprehended that mysterious warning to Belshazzar and adopted as a motto for that sheet.

Mene, Tekel, Upharsin!

CHAPTER IV.

BARON VON SAZA AND BERTHA TASTE THE SWEETNESS OF REVENGE.

BARON EMMERICH VON SAZA had wandered around in foreign lands and passed through many adventures. He had speedily consoled himself after being meanly deserted in Venice by Rosina de Meauclair under favor of the night. He had managed to exist by hook or by crook, and had been fortunate enough to come to an understanding with that redoubtable Viennese business friend of his, which secured him against annoyances from the law; and now, feeling safe in this respect, in the consciousness that the strong roots of his power were imbedded in his dear fatherland, in the spring of 1883 he had returned to Berlin.

There he had called into being that organ of the oppressed, "The Advocate," a low sheet of the basest sort. Everything that smacked of scandal was highly welcome there. It was a sort of central sewer, into which flowed unclean water from every direction—the repository of every imaginable species of hatred and calumny.

Whoever in politics had any grudge against the administration of the state and the empire, or against the loftiest officials, into the publication of which the respectable organs of the Opposition would not go, found a free vent in "The Advocate." From every line of the part referring to political economy an ear in some sort prac-

ticed could distinctly hear the clicking of the revolver; but by far the most important and significant part of the paper—that which lent to it individuality and consideration—was the column devoted to “the local”—personal gossip of the meanest sort.

In every number of the weekly edition were two or three malicious stories on conspicuous personages in masquerade attire, so transparent, however, as to leave no doubt whatever as to who was designated. These revolting indiscretions procured for “The Advocate” a large circle of ill-natured readers, who, it is true, were filled with strong moral indignation at the boundless impudence of the paper, but, all the same, waited for the appearance of the next number with a certain impatience, and regularly bought it, on the sly, from the news-stand, in order to secretly divert themselves with its malicious tales. The paper was universally condemned but much read. All were outraged that such a dirty sheet should be allowed to exist, and yet every one, even the loudest in his censure, contributed his mite to keep it afloat.

Within the circle of the initiated it had been long known that Baron Emmerich von Saza’s unclean hand was in the game, but this was not proved, and he was not to be caught. Between those who had been defamed by the gross assaults of “The Advocate” and those from whom these slanders had emanated there had been interposed the puppet of a namby-pamby, trifling vagabond, who, as the responsible publisher, gave himself up as the scape-goat for the consideration of a pitiful reward. Saza kept himself ensconced in his inaccessible hiding-place, and there carried on his nefarious trade.

He made his living out of it, and, besides that, did evil from the love of evil. He believed, or affected to believe, that society had misused him, and he deemed himself justified in taking vengeance upon this society. She had refused any longer to admit him to her presence, then she should be taught to fear him. Fear, too, was a power, a terrible power. Since the baron had perceived what effect he produced by means of his paper he had felt his power grow. He had not felt so comfortable before for years as he had done during these last few months.

He lay stretched out at full length upon his easy-chair, smoking and reading “Gil Blas,” when his old housekeeper entered, bringing him word that a young lady, Fräulein Bertha, wanted to speak to him.

"I shall be glad to see her."

Saza got up and advanced, in an affable manner, to meet Bertha, who came into the room, bowing slightly.

"At last! I had almost given up hope."

He pressed her hand and offered her a seat.

"Yes, baron," interposed Bertha, "I have made up my mind to accept your proposition. You may imagine that I had to consider carefully before coming into the house of a single man—is not that so?"

"Nothing could be clearer," remarked Saza, smiling.

"Without jesting," replied Bertha, who very well understood the significance of his smile. "I am relying upon the baron's not betraying the confidence of a respectable girl."

"Why, that's a matter of course," answered Saza, still smiling, while he tapped Bertha's cheeks. "First of all, take off your things and sit down by me, sociably. We have many a thing to talk about and regulate. We'll agree without any difficulty."

"I believe so, too," said Bertha, as she placed her parasol on the small stand by the lounge and loosened her bonnet strings. "But, before we talk of our own affairs, I should like to consult you about a secret matter, and get some advice from you."

"Gladly, my dear. Just sit down, though—here, close to me—so! And now tell me what you have at heart."

"One question before I begin, baron. May I fully depend upon your secrecy?"

"Of course you can."

"You will not put a word of it in your paper, will you?"

"Not a word, if that is your wish."

"Well, you see, baron, I have a claim against a lady of rank that is now disputed."

"What sort of a claim?"

"Indemnity for injustice suffered. I fell into misfortune through a lady of rank. So it is no more than just and proper that she should make up for it and stand by me in my trouble."

"Quite right. But if I am to help you you should explain yourself more clearly, my dear."

"Well—baron, you have certainly heard of the Iseneck robbery?"

Saza made a movement.

"Of the Iseneck robbery? Not a word! But the matter inter-

ests me. I know the family. Indeed I am nearly related to the countess. Have the Isenecks been robbed? When was it?"

"Oh, it was some time ago—over three years and a half. It was on the night of the 21st and 22d of December, 1879."

"Ah, indeed!"

The baron now nodded knowingly. The date had been a significant one in his history. On the 22d of December, 1879, he had been sentenced to six months of imprisonment, as partner in the firm of Sparber and Von Saza. He had been obliged to enter forthwith upon his term of punishment, and for the space of half a year had held no communication with the outside world. Immediately after his release from prison he had left the domains of the German Empire, and so it was altogether natural that he had heard nothing of the robbery, nor of the lawsuit it gave rise to in the spring of 1880.

"Ah, indeed!" repeated he. "On the 22d of December, 1879, I left Berlin that very day to take an extensive tour, and during my absence did not concern myself at all as to what was going on here. How did it happen?"

"Later, I'll tell you all the particulars. Enough now, that, through an unhappy accident I became involved in it. For three years I suffered in prison, being innocent. Innocent, I swear, baron!"

Bertha's eyes filled with tears, and she sobbed passionately. The baron deemed the moment a favorable one for consoling the poor girl. He patted her cheeks in a fatherly manner, and kissed her hair.

"Be comforted, poor thing! I'll see to it that you get the satisfaction you deserve."

Bertha, however, was not to be pacified so easily. The baron had to address many more sweet words to her, and convince her through his hearty sympathy that she had found in him a veritable friend. Finally she dried her tears, and, in response to the baron's friendly persuasion, concluded to go on with her report.

"At that time I was lady's maid to the countess. I had noticed for a long time that something was amiss, and had observed, too, that many a time when the president was off on a journey and the countess sleeping alone in the park chamber a visitor would come. On the night of the robbery my attention was aroused by the barking of the dog. I feared that some accident had befallen the count-

ess, and went cautiously to the back of the house. There I saw the same gentleman whom I had seen before slip through the park and into her room."

"It was the thief?"

"No. It just happened accidentally that the visitor came while the robbery was going on."

"Go on, go on! This is spicy."

"The robber was in league with another of the servants. Unfortunately I had engaged myself to that servant, whom I took for a respectable man. I was arrested upon suspicion, and since I could not prove my innocence—how is anybody to do anything of the sort? Hard, isn't it?—I was condemned. If I had only said to the judges 'It could not have been me, seeing that at that very time I was stationed at the park window on the first floor, and saw somebody,' then all would have been different. But I did not want to expose my mistress, and in order to save her honor submitted to be sentenced to three years' imprisonment."

Bertha was again overcome by emotion at the painful recollection of her magnanimity and her unmerited sufferings.

"Now I am a convicted thief, and what sort of situations are open to me? A home with a frivolous French woman, I suppose, where no respectable girl ought to stay. What would become of me if I had not found a friend in you?"

She sobbed again, and pressed her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Be composed, my love," said Saza, soothingly. "You shall see that you have found a friend in me. Only go on."

"When I was let out of prison I wrote to the countess, picturing to her the straits to which I was reduced, and begging her for a support."

"Well?"

"She sent me five hundred marks."

"And in so doing acknowledged the justness of your claim. That is important. What else?"

"Well, you know yourself how far five hundred marks go when one has to get everything new. A few days ago, therefore, I wrote to the countess again."

Saza smiled, and again patted Bertha's cheek. What a clever little girl it was to have such an eye to business! With a person so wide-awake and knowing as Bertha, what could not be accomplished!

"And what did the countess this time?"

"She sent word by the messenger that there was no answer. What do you say to that?"

"I am not surprised."

"I supposed that the countess was sick and out of sorts, and so I made another effort. Do you know what she did? Why, she sent my letter back unopened!"

Saza laughed.

"Yes, you may well laugh," continued Bertha, excitedly. "But I have been made to appear in such a bad light to the people at my boarding-house that I really have not the courage to show my face there. I picked up the letter, and have come to you. You must help me."

"Have you the letter with you?"

"Here it is."

"May I read it?"

"Yes, indeed."

Saza tore open the envelope and read:

"To the Countess von Iseneck:

"HONORED MADAME,—I can not believe that a noble lady like yourself will leave me in want. Until now I have held my tongue; but if the gracious countess refuses me the support that I have a right to ask for I shall no longer be held in restraint, but tell the world who came into the palace that night; and that would cost the countess more than the seven hundred marks for which I sue most humbly.

Your most obedient servant,

"BERTHA SCHMIDER.

"The bearer will wait for an answer."

Again Saza smiled and shook his head.

"Well, my dear, be glad that your letter was not opened; for, to be candid—now, don't take it ill of me—it was as silly as possible, and you might have been clapped into prison again with no other proof than the contents of this letter."

"How so?"

"Without anything more, depend upon it. In order to get anything, one must go to work in a very different manner. I must consider over the matter. I do not exactly know myself how yet. And what a paltry sum you asked for the keeping of your weighty secret! The Isenecks have money—plenty of money—and they

must bleed accordingly. Your fortune must be secured to you once for all; and it will be just as easy to demand seven thousand, nay, seventy thousand marks as seven hundred. Let me consider over it a bit; great things may come of this."

The baron rose to his feet, and measured the apartment with lingering steps. Bertha was electrified by the prospect of a fortune settled upon her, at the fabulous sums which the baron had so coolly suggested. Seventy thousand marks!

"Perhaps one could cut into the thing from the other side," said Saza, thoughtfully, still walking up and down. "I do not say that it would be better, but it must come under consideration. Who was that nightly visitor to the Countess Iseneck?"

"Must I tell that?"

"If we are to work together you must tell me everything."

"The Prince von Engernheim."

"Who?" asked Saza, with strong emphasis, and, as it were, stupefied. He stood still as though spellbound, and turned his head toward Bertha.

"Prince Ulrich von Engernheim," repeated she, quietly.

A sickly, horrid smile—rather a grin—distorted the features of his dark, ugly face.

"Engernheim! That is odd!" cried he, resuming his promenade.

He laughed aloud.

But suddenly he hushed; his step dragged, and then, stopping altogether, he dropped into a chair, and, knitting his brows, looked down thoughtfully. A vista opened before his gaze. He saw dim outlines that gradually seemed to take firmer shape. He was uneasy lest some disturbance, some remark of Bertha's might divert his thoughts and withdraw from him the object of his consideration. While he put the thumb of his left hand under his chin and the forefinger across his mouth, he made a deprecating sign to Bertha with his right hand without lifting his eyes from the ground.

"One minute," he whispered.

There reigned a deep silence. Presently Saza raised his head, leaned back in his easy-chair, and said:

"So it was on the night of the 21st and 22d of December, 1879, was it? You say you saw Prince Engernheim slink through the park into the countess's room?"

"Yes, I did."

"That agrees, too—it agrees."

The dim, confused image floating before him had become bright and distinct.

Now the baron remembered the sequence of events with perfect accuracy. At first they had rushed in upon him in a confused medley—the scene in the box at Kroll's, the tall gentleman who came out of the park, the drosky! Now all was in rank and file. The evening before his sentence was pronounced—that last evening of his freedom—came back vividly before him.

He had worked until midnight and made all his preparations so as to be able to leave Berlin without attracting any attention in case of his condemnation. All the money he could lay hands on had been transmitted to a business friend in Vienna. He had burned up papers that might have compromised him, and cleared up generally. His trunks were soon packed. Then he had dressed himself for the ball. He was expected at Kroll's. Out of doors a terrific storm raged. A drosky was not to be had. He waited until the snow-storm abated. About a quarter before two he left his lodgings on Koniggrätzerstrasse. He walked on the side where the trees were. There he saw how a tall gentleman with a stove-pipe hat on his head and enveloped in a long fur overcoat had come out of the gate leading to the Iseneck palace. He was surprised at this, but did not concern himself further about the matter, since he saw a drosky coming, which he had hailed, and it stopped, too; but the drosky had been snatched away by the gentleman who had come out of the park, from under his nose. He wanted to inform against the coachman, and had therefore taken down his number, 1,111. Then he had met Prince Ulrich in the theatre-box and been insulted in an unheard-of manner—it all agreed.

"Remarkable, remarkable," exclaimed he, shaking his head, "that you should tell this to just me, the only one who can confirm the perfect truthfulness of your words! For I myself saw the prince come out of the park that night."

"And yet he denied it before the court," remarked Bertha.

"Who?" asked Saza, with flashing eye.

"The prince."

"Incredible! Did the prince appear before a court of justice?"

"Of course he did. I had him summoned."

"And he denied that he had been in the park that night?"

"Yes, indeed! The lawyer asked him if he had come straight from the party to Kroll's, and he said he did so."

"Glorious! glorious!" shouted Saza, while he rubbed his hands together. "What a snarl we shall get him into! And he is not to escape from us without a good ransom. Here comes the opportunity for having a little explanation with his Highness, and making it clear to that high and mighty gentleman that a nobleman is not to be insulted with impunity, and that he knows, moreover, how to avenge an insult. We'll play that haughty nobleman a queer tune, and you shall see how he will dance to our piping."

In feverish excitement, and gesticulating in a lively way, the baron moved to and fro.

Bertha cast anxious glances at him.

"What does all this mean, baron?"

"Nothing. Do not 'baron' me, sweetheart!" cried Saza, in his ecstasy seizing Bertha and giving her a warm embrace. "No formalities between such good friends as we are. Was it seven hundred marks that you asked for? Ha! ha! ha! Why you have a fortune. You are provided for in the future, and so am I! You have no idea how rich we are!"

"I don't understand—"

"You'll understand quick enough! Ah, his Highness denied having paid such a visit that night, did he? Well, we'll prove that he did pay it. My proof is incontestable. And, moreover, we'll confront him with the coachman, whom I shall produce without fail. So Prince Ulrich von Engernheim has been guilty of perjury. The penitentiary pays for that. Do you comprehend now? Does it not dawn upon you now what we have in our hands? The honor of the Iseneck family, the freedom, yes, the life of the Prince von Engernheim! That is capital upon which one may live well, believe me. And as to its paying interest, you may trust me for that!"

Saza was excited to such a degree that he had no sense for anything else. He begged Bertha to move over to his house, bag and baggage, and give whatever orders she deemed needful or even desirable. As to the question of expense, she need take no further trouble, for they were rich now and could live sumptuously at their ease.

Three days afterward Bertha Schmider was installed at Baron von Saza's as lady of the house.

During the next week Saza slighted his editorial duties grossly.

He handed over the interests of the paper to his colleague almost exclusively. He had told this party that he was preparing a great "stroke," and, to make it so much the more effective, had meanwhile to keep as still as a mouse. His colleague tried as hard as he could to follow in the master's footsteps, but made a poor success of it. The readers of "The Advocate" missed the pen of its spiciest contributor.

"What a sudden falling off there has been in this paper," was heard here and there, not without a certain amount of regret: "There is nothing in it any more."

But in secret Saza was developing an activity much the more untiring. Slowly and wisely he laid off the mines for the warfare of destruction which he was determined to wage, and from which he hoped to return home with booty that would well repay him for the toils of battle. He had the quick-match in his hand. He could have the explosion whenever he chose.

He had initiated Bertha thoroughly into all the particulars of the crime and its consequences. He smiled in a peculiar way when he heard that a certain Rose Moockel had taken her part in the play. Bertha deemed it superfluous to mention that she had recently come into contact with this person again, for then her lie, as to her position of companion to a French lady, would have been discovered, and might have made a bad impression upon her friend.

He informed himself as to every particular of the court of investigation previously held and the course of the public transactions. He procured all the newspapers that had articles in them referring to the robbery and its consequences, the announcement of rewards for whomsoever should restore the lost property, also the newspaper with the account of a session of court, where not even the names of the parties most interested were called; in a word, all the material relating to that robbery.

He had drawn up a complete bill of indictment.

For this the testimony of the wholly impartial coachman was of special value. He himself had had a painful altercation with the prince. There might, then, be attributed to him the bitterness of resentment, a desire to be revenged upon the prince, and thus his testimony might be called in question. If the prince persisted in his denial, then affirmation would stand against affirmation, and the judges would be little likely to take his part. The coachman of drosky I,III, then, must be unearthed at any price. Not without

many difficulties did he finally succeed. The coachman sought for had been obliged to give up active work on account of rheumatism, and, as Saza at last found out, was at that time owner of a beer-cellar in Invalidenstrasse, which was frequented by his former colleagues. Augustus Spiddel was his name.

After the baron had discovered the whereabouts of this individual, the recalling to his mind of the facts in question brought up new difficulties not easily to be overcome.

"Yes, my dear sir, it has often snowed," declared Mr. Spiddel composedly, as he sat opposite the baron in the little room behind the shop, Mrs. Spiddel having taken her husband's place behind the counter, "and I have often driven through Königgrätzerstrasse. How am I to single out any special time?"

Saza repeated all the particulars to him, the old man still continuing to shake his head and repeating, "How am I to single out that time?"

But all at once, suddenly, just when Saza was on the point of despairing, a gleam of light seemed to reveal something to the old man.

"Wait a bit," said he, slowly. "Yes, yes, yes! That count gave me a ten-mark piece—yes, it was in Königgrätzerstrasse—at Kroll's—there was a ball! Yes, indeed! There was a devilish storm. And another gentleman wanted to ride, too. It agrees! agrees! So that other one was you, was it?" The old man smiled good-humoredly. "You wanted to report me? All right! But I had my ten marks in my pocket, or as good as there, and drove on rapidly."

The baron drew a deep breath. He felt an unspeakable satisfaction.

"At last!" he exclaimed. "How is it, old man, that all on a sudden you know the whole thing?"

"Merely because of those ten marks. Such a windfall had not come to me often, long as I had sat upon the box, and one does not easily forget a thing of the kind."

"Now, good friend, let us talk over the matter once more squarely. You remember that in the winter of 1879 to 1880—you know the year exactly?"

"Yes, indeed, it was the last year that I drove a drosky. Since April, 1880, I have been keeping this cellar."

"That in the winter of 1879 and 1880, one evening when there was a heavy snow-storm and a ball at Kroll's, you took up a pas-

senger in Königgrätzerstrasse, between Vossstrasse and the Brandenburger Thor, who, for the little distance to Kroll's, paid you the unusually high price of ten marks?"

"Exactly."

"And that, at the same time, another gentleman, who had previously hailed you, wanted to make use of the drosky?"

"Yes, indeed, but the count had got ahead of him and called out to me: 'Drive on! You shall have a ten-mark fee! To Kroll's!' and so away I drove!"

"And the gentleman who got in was a great, tall man in a fur overcoat. It is likely that you looked closer than usual at a passenger who feed you so handsomely."

"I had no need to do that. I knew the gentleman."

"You knew him?" asked Saza, in the most joyful surprise.

"Certainly, I did! I had driven for him often enough. I had my stand those days in Schadowstrasse. And there I have often enough carried him home from his club. It was a good coach. The count boarded at the Kaiserhof, and gave a dollar every time."

Saza remembered that Prince Engernheim had indeed resided for some while at the Kaiserhof.

"So you would have no difficulty in recognizing him again?"

"Certainly not."

"But you do not know his name, you are always calling him 'count.'"

"Who can call everybody's name! We used to give the title 'count' to all the gentlemen of the club—nobody would be offended then."

"Well, dear friend, don't forget what you have just called to mind. I dare make you no present and no promises. For, after what you have just told me, you will probably be summoned before a court, and I should render myself liable to prosecution if I should seek to influence you. But, quite apart from what we have just been talking about, I can tell you I am no ungrateful person, and I never forget a service rendered me. Depend upon that, brave friend. So, once more, stick well to what you have just told me, if anybody questions you about it."

Augustus Spiddel did not understand clearly what all this signified. But he was not particularly excited about it. He had been a drosky-driver over forty years, and had learned to sit upon his box with a wonderful amount of composure and stolidity. He was

not at all curious. And if he understood only about half, or not at all, it was all one to him. He did not bother his brain as to wherefore the baron was so concerned to know everything about the passenger he took up in Königgrätzerstrasse, and when Saza offered him his hand he shook it heartily, and said, grinning good-humoredly :

“ Adieu, dear sir ! And come see us again soon ! ”

Baron Emmerich von Saza, as he left the cellar with bowed head and got into the drosky which had been waiting for him at the door, experienced a sensation such as a general may feel after he has won a victory. He drew several deep breaths and smiled to himself in quiet contentment.

He had found a witness that would compel Prince Ulrich von Engernheim to surrender to him at discretion. None other than himself, Baron Emmerich von Saza, would dictate the terms of peace. And though they should be inhumanly hard, still they would have to be accepted. Saza was determined to prosecute his victory to the uttermost. He could only perceive one barrier to his unbounded covetousness—the prince’s life must be spared, the unhappy victim must not be driven to commit suicide ; but to the verge of suicide, to the abyss of despair.

It was not impossible but that the prince might be clear-sighted enough to see the advisability of a compromise, and be persuaded to offer good terms. It would, indeed, be a little expensive, but still it was the wisest thing that he could do.

Baron von Saza and Bertha went that evening to the Italian opera at the Flora, and enjoyed themselves hugely.

CHAPTER V.

ULRICH AND ALIX HAPPY IN HOME LIFE.—THEY VISIT THEIR COLLECTION OF LACES.

AFTER more than three years of wedded life, now, for the first time, Prince Ulrich and Princess Alix von Engernheim found themselves really alone. For a year past Prince Ulrich had been Secretary of Legation at St. Petersburg, and there, as well as in Vienna, the young people had been drawn into the vortex of fashionable society, and hardly paused for reflection.

Now they were glad of heart, because for six weeks they had been recuperating from the dissipation of the winter in the seclusion of Castle Kypstein, and could live for each other and their charming boy, who was called Gunther, after his grandfather, and who would complete the first year of his life in fourteen days, on the memorable second of September.

The pair loved each other truly and ardently, and they now realized, what indeed they had long since known, that they needed no one to perfect their happiness besides each other and their boy. The days swept by, and whenever they saw the sun sinking behind the wooded heights of the shore lying opposite they were astonished that another day was already gone.

The old castle Kypstein had been four hundred years in building, and, in utter contempt of its predecessor, each period had impressed upon the building the stamp of its own taste. The outcome had been a wondrous architectural conglomeration, which, however, was uncommonly pleasing in its departure from conventional rules, and, in spite of the diversity of single parts, formed a whole that was harmonious, if not a unit. The oldest part, dating from the beginning of the fifteenth century, indicated the clumsy feudal style by its octagonal tower, the walls of which were thickly overgrown with ivy, and the heavy, Gothic ornamentation of doors and windows.

The main building, remodeled at the beginning of the sixteenth century, had been rebuilt in the noble and commanding style of the high Renaissance, the niches of the magnificent façade being adorned with glorious stone masonry designed by an Italian master and carried into execution by the most skillful German artisans.

Against this proud edifice leaned in unjustifiable familiarity the so-called "Herrenbau," an architectural caprice executed in most unconventional style with marked defects, but uncommonly attractive from its bright and cheerful aspect.

The "Herrenbau" had originated with Ulrich's great-grandfather, a jovial, pleasure-loving gentleman who had passed his youth at the court of Versailles, and who felt ill at ease in apartments got up in the imposing but gloomy style of the Renaissance. He had a new addition put to the venerable old castle, which, in its winding corridors, its droll outlines, and the bright and harmonious colors of all its furniture, awakened him to rejuvenating memories of the gay existence once led at Versailles.

Ulrich's father, the quiet recluse Prince Gunther, felt a holy horror for this "Herrenbau." He caused it to be completely shut off, never entered it, and satisfied himself with seeing to it that the rococo palace was kept in good order and no injury done to its costly furniture, household utensils, stuffs, and Gobelin tapestry.

Ulrich, on the contrary, who had grown up in the Renaissance part of the house, sympathized fully in the taste of his pleasure-loving great-grandfather; and a short time after he took possession of Kypstein, he transferred his residence to the "Herrenbau," and had it altered into a commodious abode. The Renaissance portion of the palace was now only frequented by strangers who were interested in the famous Kypstein art collection which was quartered there.

The situation of the palace was wondrously beautiful, crowning the summit of a densely wooded mountain with precipitous sides. A well-graded road led up to this height from the small town in the valley, lying on the shore of the swift-flowing river.

From the palace, and especially from the "Herrenbau," the prospect was enchanting. The somewhat contracted but boisterous little river here, upon its departure from the mountains, seemed disposed to play rather wild pranks in its moist and pebbly bed, and dashed its water threateningly against the rocks, until it foamed madly as it beat against the larger boulders.

At the foot of the mountain, washed by the rushing water, lay the village, with its unpretending little houses, which were almost altogether covered with slate, and from which only the stately towers of two churches emerged.

Behind the town opened a broad plain with diversified fields regularly laid off, and separated from each other by hedges and shrubs. Woodland was interspersed here and there, the trees continually gaining upon the open country until in the distant background they seemed to mass themselves into a great forest. Only a few cottages and farm-houses were to be seen on the plain. On particularly bright days the pale-blue outlines of the mountain-range were distinguishable; but commonly the plain was lost in a luminous gray mist that was imperceptibly merged into the eternal ether.

Opposite to Kypstein, on the other shore, lay a thickly wooded chain of hills which, in soft lines, followed the river up to this spot. The foliage of the trees, in consequence of prolonged drought and

the heat of August days, had already put on the indescribably lovely tints of autumnal coloring—from light yellow and orange through all the shadings of green to flashing red and dull, deep brown.

It was always beautiful here; in sunshine, when the river glittered in the valley like a burning ribbon and the slate roofs sparkled, when the forests were in the full splendor of their autumnal glory, and also, the sky being overcast, when a soft veil seemed to overspread the heights and the slate roofs to be mantled in a melancholy gray. Yes, it was beautiful, by every light, in the morning, when the early rays of the sun refreshed and rejuvenated the lovely landscape, and at a later hour, when everything was steeped in solemn darkness and the little candles in the village sparkled like golden dots.

And not a sound of the city! No rolling of carriages, no creaking of wheels, no whistling of locomotives. Only the monotonous murmur of the river in the valley; the rustling of the leaves; the sighs, lamentations, and howling of the wind, which here, to be sure, was blowing all the while; and now and then, far, far away, the crowing of emulous cocks.

Ulrich and Alix had made a thousand delightful plans as to how they should spend their two months' stay at Kypstein. They had firmly resolved to make excursions to the points of interest in the neighborhood, to visit families connected with them here and there, to give a few dinners and at least one grand entertainment.

And lo! they had been at Kypstein six weeks, and nothing of all this had been done. They laughed at each other about it and could not themselves comprehend how their days had slipped away from them.

"Do you know," said Alix one day, "that I have never yet seen our collection of art treasures, although people come miles to see it?"

"Have you missed the sight?" asked Ulrich, smiling.

"Not that, but still it is a sin and a shame! And I am mortally ashamed when conversation turns in that direction."

"All you have to do is to say quietly, 'We have that, too,' whenever anything very *recherché* is mentioned. For really we have everything of the kind. My good father included everything rare in his collection. As for the rest, commit yourself no further, if I may be permitted to advise. One must make a real study of such things to be able to appreciate them, and for this neither of us has time."

"But, nevertheless, I ought to have seen it out of respect to our position!"

"Of course. And the custodian, who compassionates me on account of unsatisfactory acquirements and groans in secret over my being so unskilled a *connoisseur*, will take peculiar pleasure in conducting us over it and in letting his light shine before us."

"Then let us do it at once, else we shall never find time for it."

"At this moment we can ill spare the time for it; but we need not tarry long. So, come if you choose."

Alix put on her straw hat, and the two repaired to the Renaissance building.

The custodian of the museum was indeed entranced, and felt highly honored in being allowed to expatiate to the noble owners upon the glories of articles, which Ulrich certainly undervalued in a lamentable manner, with erudite information as to the time and place of their origin and authoritative indications as to their qualities and excellencies from an artistic point of view.

For more than an hour the prince and Alix were busy admiring the art work of the past. Both of them were rather tired of all that they had been obliged to see and hear. Finally they came to the section of textile fabrics, and, with a smile of resignation, the prince gave Alix a sly look expressive of the confident expectation and hope that this pastime would soon come to an end.

"This, most noble princess, is the famous 'Lamoral' lace," the custodian proceeded to say, "the queen of Brabant lace work which was given by Count Lamoral Egmont as a wedding present to the hero of our classic drama, the Infanta Philip, afterward King Philip II of Spain, the father of Don Carlos, the hero of another of our tragedies, on the occasion of his second marriage. There is a long legendary history attached to this lace—"

"To be sure, doctor," interposed Ulrich, in a friendly tone; and in his anxiety lest the eager scholar should hold a long lecture, he added the fib, "I have already told my wife the history of the 'Lamoral.'"

"Indeed!" smirked the custodian.

"Very interesting," averred the kind-hearted Alix, who had no idea what they were talking about. But there was something else that she knew. "Is not this the very lace of which poor Liane had an imitation?" inquired she of her husband.

"The same," answered Ulrich, endeavoring to lead Alix farther. But the custodian detained him by a remark.

"With regard to this 'Lamoral,' I should much like to make a communication that I have had at heart for some days."

"Speak on, please."

"I am no specialist as to lace, and so may easily be mistaken. But it does seem to me as if the 'Lamoral' has faded since the time we lent it out, by your Highness's direction. The color strikes me as suspicious, and I want to ask, if we would not do well to call in a specialist to examine the lace, and find out if an exchange was not effected—unwittingly, it may be."

"That is hardly imaginable," replied Ulrich, somewhat nervously. "We can talk over it another time."

"Exactly as your Highness orders."

The prince and princess took leave of the superintendent of the museum with many thanks. In warm words they commended the model order, the judicious and systematic arrangement of specimens. The custodian felt honored, and the married pair were glad to get through with an irksome task.

"There is really a great deal that is beautiful here, besides being very interesting and instructive, and yet," remarked Alix, "it is all nothing to me. I can tell the doctor one thing, he is not going to get me into his museum again, for all that he is a very polite and cultivated man. However, we'll invite him to dinner shortly."

"With the others?" asked Ulrich, sportively.

"Yes, it is inexcusable! We really must give a dinner soon."

"As soon as we have time."

"Yes, that is the thing, we never do have any time here."

And actually, they were not to find a time when they could discharge what they esteemed to be their social obligations. A few days afterward, before the expiration of his furlough, the prince received a dispatch from the office announcing the desirability of his presence in Berlin at once. Ulrich had been prepared for such a summons. The post of ambassador to one of the inferior powers was vacant, and he had learned that he had been spoken of for the place. He replied that he would make ready for the journey forthwith, and in two days would be in Berlin.

On one of the last days of August, Ulrich, Alix, and little Gunther, with their attendants, arrived at Berlin; they repaired to

beautiful apartments which had been engaged for them at the Hotel Royal.

Ulrich had a peculiar feeling as he passed to his hotel by way of Wilhelmstrasse, after his first interview at the office, which did indeed have reference to his assumption of the vacant post of ambassador. He came along by the Iseneck palace. He had heard that the count had not yet returned from his summer's vacation, and knew that the Countess Juliane had shut out the whole world, and had received no company for some years.

From this palace, now so still, dark rumors had penetrated into the circle of society that grave fears were entertained concerning the young countess's state of mind. People did not even know whether or not the countess was in Berlin. For years had the *portier* been regularly announcing: "The countess is on a journey." But almost daily there was seen to halt at the main entrance, the familiar equipage of the Privy Councilor Dr. Lohausen, who had such a large practice and was so popular among the fashionable residents of Wilhelmstrasse and the Thiergarten. The president had plainly intimated, that he no longer wished to be questioned as to his wife's state of health.

And thus Juliane had as good as disappeared.

Ulrich had almost forgotten poor Juliane, absorbed as he was in his own happiness as the husband of the charming Alix and the father of rosy-cheeked little Gunther. Yet how had this been possible? As he slowly passed by the iron railing, he addressed this question to himself, without finding any reply. And yet he was no ingrate, no bad man. He shook his head. He could no longer find the connection between his present and his past. He looked back upon "Mad Ulrich" as though he were a perfect stranger to him. He had been metamorphosed, as it were. He found it hard to recognize himself in what he had been.

For the first time it became clear to him that he must long since have taken the decisive step across the threshold to manly maturity. What lay behind was a strange intermingling of what was gay, clamorous, and bewildering—a receding sea, whence here and there emerged some memory in pristine freshness, but, also, there sometimes rushed forth what saddened and pained him. But all this was more or less done away with; it had departed from him and his. He distinguished it only indistinctly now, its forms had vanished, and its sounds were dying away like a far off murmuring. What

now moved him and wholly filled his being, was something entirely different.

It was plain, hearty, genuine love for his wife, with whom he was one in every feeling, every impulse, every pulsation—whom he did not observe, did not study, did not analyze, but simply loved, and who clung to him with the same fond, devoted love; it was the affection of a father for the tender young creature to whom he had given life, and in whose large violet-blue eyes, with their guileless innocence, he read things unutterable; it was the earnestness with which he fulfilled duties voluntarily assumed, his ardent longing to make some adequate return for the rich gifts and capabilities for good bestowed upon him by a beneficent Providence.

Yes, he had reason to be grateful to Providence! And only through the strictest performance of duty, through unremitting diligence could he prove himself worthy of such favors. He believed firmly, like Goethe, in the power to bless of a never-resting, never-sated activity. He had shaped his whole life according to this rule ever since the day when, for the first time, he had seriously reflected upon himself and his responsibilities, and from this rule he had never departed.

He thought of his unclouded happiness, for, since his marriage with Alix not the slightest shadow had ever darkened his sky. Meanwhile the tempest was brewing that was soon to burst in fury upon this unsuspecting prince, who was walking along thus cheerfully with uplifted head, upon the husband of a sweet, loving wife, the father of that lovely boy.

Soon the lightning flashed and the first muttering of the thunder was heard.

On Gunther's first birthday, which was to be an occasion of such joy to his parents, the prince received through the post the following letter.

"BERLIN, September 1, 1883.

"YOUR HIGHNESS: The writer of this letter was formerly maid to the Countess von Iseneck, who, on account of supposed participation in the robbery committed there, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment. I suffered wrongfully, your Highness. While the robbery was going on I was standing at the hall-window of the first story. I saw some one come through the park into the palace whom I had seen often before. My wish was to say nothing of the transaction, in order to spare the lady, and because no one would

have believed me then. Now they will be obliged to believe me, for there is a witness who saw the same gentleman when he left the park that night. The gentleman took a drosky, and was driven to Kroll's.

"I owe it to myself to clear up my own character, and my lawyer, to whom I communicated the facts without calling any names, has advised me to demand a new investigation of the case, for a convicted thief can not procure a situation. But, before making up my mind to this, I want to see whether means for an adequate support can not be procured for me without injuring the standing of people of rank.

"I have already applied to the Countess Iseneck, and she has admitted the justness of my claim by granting me a small sum—five hundred marks—but that, of course, did not satisfy me. I have to be indemnified for three years of unmerited suffering, and a maintenance secured for the future.

"I have not the slightest claim upon your Highness. I know, though, that your Highness has a good heart, and, as a former intimate friend of the countess, will know how to advise me well, and tell me how I could possibly get my rights without doing any harm to the countess and involving a certain person holding an exalted position.

"Only for this information do I sue your Highness—for nothing else. Since I know how close were your relations to the Iseneck family, it will not seem strange that I should first address myself to your Highness. I should be obliged to have recourse to strangers for this help if your Highness can not or will not lend an ear to the very humble petition of

"Your Highness's most obedient servant,

"BERTHA SCHMIDER.

"Address, for the time being,

"Care of BARON EMMERICH VON SAZA,

"Charlottenstrasse, S. W."

Prince Ulrich was greatly shocked when he read this letter, which seemed to call up a ghost from the past which he had deemed forever laid, enduing it once more with a hideous life.

That this writing, with its well-rounded periods, which said everything to the knowing and nothing insidious at all to the uninitiated, was not the work of a servant-maid, but a dictation, he knew.

And he presumed that this dictation emanated from Baron von Saza, whose name had not undesignedly been given. Truly the girl had hit upon the proper person!

The prince was also not slow to perceive that extortion on a grand scale had been planned and would be put into operation. So far as he himself was concerned, he would undoubtedly have been ready to make the most material pecuniary sacrifice if the matter could thereby be set at rest. But he had to admit that an endless screw would be applied; but, above everything, it was impossible for him to enter into an insupportable relationship of dependence upon this person and her abettor. He could not even venture to take any one into his confidence, for in that case he would have been obliged to touch upon what was not his own secret.

In his perplexity he came to no other conclusion than to remain inactive and await further developments.

CHAPTER VI.

THE "LAMORAL" LACE FOUND.

SAZA meanwhile was preparing for what he called his "grand stroke." He had foreseen the possibility of a great tumult being raised shortly in connection with his name, and he had accordingly made up his mind to smooth down as much as possible all the little irregularities of his life that might be brought to light upon this occasion. Properly speaking, his whole existence had been one long, unbroken chain of irregularities; these meanwhile had been so conditioned that nothing criminal could be brought home to him.

After he had made up with his ill-treated Vienna business friend, only one more dark spot was to be wiped out—a mere trifle—that unsettled hotel bill at Vienna. Those few hundred gold crowns weighed upon him. And since his associate in "The Advocate" had recently made an unexpectedly good thing of his refusal to publish an article written to expose the manoeuvres of a suspicious banking-house—as this article would have ruined the bank—a not inconsiderable sum was paid him by way of indemnity; and inasmuch as this honestly gained money was divided fairly between

the two proprietors of the paper, and Saza was for the time being well provided for, he wrote to the hotel-keeper at Vienna.

He excused himself as well as he could, thanked "mine host" in the politest manner for the long credit extended him, and begged him to send him the amount of his bill, with interest added, by post, or in any other way that might be more convenient to him. After a few days there came to the baron from the hotel-keeper a bill for the amount of the debt. Saza paid up to the last cent. Soon afterward he also had sent to him two trunks, which contained all the personal effects left behind by Rose and himself at the time of their sudden departure—clothes, linen, and various articles which Saza had well-nigh forgotten.

He told Bertha some falsehoods as to the source whence came the things which had belonged to Rose, and gave her free leave to select and keep whatever she liked or thought might be useful to her, but to sell the rest to a dealer in old clothes. The inspection of them filled Bertha with a certain contempt for their former unknown owner, and she only deemed a few trifles worthy of appropriation.

"Just look at this trash!" said she, while she called her friend's attention to the articles of clothing spread out upon the chairs and tables. "The whole business is not worth the price paid for bringing them here."

Just then the baron's glance fell upon a shabby winter cloak faced with fawn-colored plush, and he gave a sudden start of surprise.

"I had forgotten all about that cloak!" he cried. "You are mistaken; that cloak is worth more than you have any idea of. Just take a look at its facing."

"Quite ordinary woolen plush," answered Bertha, contemptuously.

"I do not mean its trimming; I mean something that is hidden. The worth of pure gold is sewed into it. I should know, for I had to give its value to the former owner when she left it in my charge at Vienna. So rip the lining off carefully, for, if I have not been deceived, you will find something to surprise you."

Bertha smiled suspiciously. Meanwhile she fetched a pair of scissors, picked up the cloak, seated herself, and began to cut the stitches that held the lining in place.

The baron, full of curiosity, stood at her back.

"There may be some truth in the thing," remarked she, after a

more attentive scrutiny. "The upper part is done by the machine, and this is hand-sewed."

She had now ripped open a large piece and lightened her work by tearing apart material and lining with a rustling noise.

What was that?

What she now saw made her speechless from astonishment—in fact, almost paralyzed her. She turned pale, opened her mouth, and leaned back in her chair. The cloak slipped from her knees on to the floor.

"What is the matter with you?" asked Saza, in surprise.

"For God's sake!" exclaimed Bertha, "tell me where that thing came from."

"What thing?"

"That."

She again picked up the cloak in nervous haste, trembling from excitement, ripped open the side seam, and then pointed to the lace which was basted to the lining with light stitches.

"Why that!" repeated she, in an awe-stricken tone. "That! Do you know what it is? That is the famous stolen lace. The lace that was stolen from the Countess Iseneck at the time of the robbery. For heaven's sake, tell me how it got there! And how did you come by it?"

Saza, too, was quite overcome by this unexpected revelation.

"The Countess Iseneck's lace?" repeated he, excitedly.

"The 'Lamoral' lace. How come you by it?"

At first the baron was in no condition to answer this question even to himself. He seated himself at the window, opposite to Bertha, wrinkled his brow, propped his chin upon his hand, and thoughtfully gazed out of doors. Gradually the wrinkles banished from his brow; he had found the connecting link. And now his lips were distorted into a mocking smile.

He had learned through Bertha of the intimate relations existing between Rose Moockel and Fritz Wildicke in former days. He knew, too, that Rose also had sat upon the criminal bench. He smiled. So Rose had been the slyest of all the party.

Saza was the only one who knew the solution of the conundrum, and he had no idea of admitting Bertha to his confidence.

"So that is the Countess Iseneck's lace!" exclaimed he, in a tone of contentment, as he arose from his seat. "You are sure that this is true?"

"Quite sure," said Bertha, with great positiveness. "I have had that lace in my hands for hours as many as thirty times, and would know it again among thousands. But only explain to me—"

"I do not rightly understand the matter myself. The lady to whom the cloak used to belong has told me a decided untruth. I must presume that she had some connection with the receiver of the stolen goods, and perhaps had been commissioned by him to dispose of the lace in Vienna. This plan was frustrated by our sudden departure."

"It must be something of that kind. Dear me!" cried Bertha, continuing to shake her head incessantly; "it does seem impossible that I should be the one to find that lace again! How is it possible?"

She could not regain her composure.

"But what are we to do with it, now that we have it?" asked she after a pause, while, with the most scrupulous pains she freed the delicate fabric from its confinement.

Saza, of course, had not thought for an instant of keeping the costly article or making the attempt to turn the discovery to his own benefit.

"What are we to do with it? Nothing," answered he. "We shall prepare a great pleasure for the Isenecks by restoring it to them again. And now it does occur to me, if I am not mistaken, that Count Iseneck offered a very high reward to the restorer of his stolen goods, and an especially high one for the restorer of the lace. I shall look into it directly, for I have collected all the numbers of the newspapers referring to the robbery. The Isenecks are richer than we are, and I do not see why we should be giving them presents."

The portfolio containing the documents having reference to the Iseneck robbery lay on top of the baron's secretary. This was precisely the thing that he had been at work upon with restless diligence for some weeks past. And what he sought he soon found. A whole series of articles referred to the Iseneck robbery that had been published partly by the authorities, partly by the party robbed. The latest of these, which had been inserted several times, ran thus:

"A Three Thousand Marks' Reward. On the night of the 21st and 22d of December of last year there was stolen from the Iseneck palace a specimen of modern lace, a skillful imitation of one of the

choicest specimens of Brabant manufacture dating from the sixteenth century (the so-called 'Lamoral' lace), and particular importance is attached to its recovery. The above reward will be given to any one who returns this lace to its owner in good condition, or to any one who enables him to regain possession of it. For information as to the whereabouts of this lace, a corresponding reward will be given. For further particulars go to the *portier* at the Iseneck palace.

"BERLIN, *March*, 1880."

"Three thousand marks!" laughed Saza. "That is to say fifteen hundred marks apiece. That is not much, but worth collecting, isn't it, my dear?"

He patted Bertha on the cheek. So far the girl had not been able to recover from her shock. The apparently sure prospect of getting possession of fifteen hundred marks brought her in some sort to her senses.

"Why anybody should offer a reward of three thousand marks for that thing," continued he, catching up one end of the lace and examining its workmanship, "is incomprehensible to me. What is such a thing worth, anyhow?"

"I can not estimate it," replied Bertha. "But Count Iseneck knows very well what he is about, and if he sets a reward of three thousand marks upon it, you may depend upon it that it is surely worth five times, may be ten times as much."

"That must be found out," continued Saza, and after a short pause he added, with altered voice: "Hold, I have it. I have found my man! The whole affair will have to be managed by his means. A few hundred marks must be deducted to pay his fee, to be sure. But then we shall be quit of all annoyance, have nothing more to do with the whole business, and for that one might be willing to make a small sacrifice."

Saza had bethought himself of his old partner Sparber, who in his youth had been a dealer in antiquities, and, as Saza knew, had lately gone back to his ancient calling. He also carried on the loan and commission business as accessory, only much more cautiously and secretly. Saza did not pause long for reflection, but took the lace which had been carefully folded together and made into a parcel by Bertha, and set off to find Sparber.

They greeted each other like old and unprejudiced friends, and

after they had told each other many an untruth as to their experiences during their long years of separation, the baron turned the conversation upon the proper aim of his visit.

Saza told his former partner in business that in a peculiar way he had fallen heir to a lady's cloak, which he wanted to present to a certain girl. Upon her attempting to alter this cloak so as to fit her figure, she had discovered a piece of lace sewed in between the stuff and its lining. She had told him about what she had found, and he had immediately recognized it as the property of his cousin, the Countess Juliane von Iseneck, *née* Countess Wiking.

"You know," interjected he, "my mother was a Wiking."

Hereupon he had looked into the matter and found that on the 21st of December, 1879, this lace had been stolen from the palace Iseneck, together with other articles. For the recovery of this lace Iseneck had offered an especial reward of three thousand marks. But on account of the delicacy incident to relationship, he did not like to treat directly with Iseneck, and would like Sparber to act as mediator—of course, for a consideration.

"Three thousand marks! I believe so," grinned Sparber, after he had opened the parcel and spread out the "Lamoral." "This is a work of art that is simply inestimable."

"An imitation," declared Saza.

"God forbid! No imitation at all. This lace is genuine, as surely as you and I are of flesh and blood."

"But just read here. I have brought the advertisement with me."

Sparber read the paragraph marked out in the newspaper and shook his head. He again took the lace into his hand, stepped into the light, and held it close before his eyes. And again he incredulously shook his worthy head. He fetched a microscope and scrutinized the work more attentively.

"Is it possible that I could be deceived?" said he, slowly. "It is simply impossible to regard this as an imitation. There, to be sure, is a torn place that has been mended at a later date. Well, Count Iseneck is the one who should know best. But perhaps he only used artifice in order to depreciate its value—I do believe so. However, we must get more exact information on the subject. I am acquainted with the first authority in textile fabrics, and if this expert shares my conviction, then let Count Iseneck say what he chooses, I know what I have to do. In that case Count Iseneck

will have to open his purse wider. I shall adopt your story of the cloak. I might just as well have come into possession of the cloak as you." And Sparber smiled slyly.

"It is no fable that I have told you," remarked Saza. "I will even send you the cloak."

"Do so. I'll undertake to transact the business with the count. To charge fifteen per cent upon the proceeds is surely not too high pay for my work. Just think of all the running about—"

"Agreed!" declared Saza. "I'll send you the cloak, which you may need to refer to. You, then, attend to everything and deduct fifteen per cent from the proceeds."

"Agreed!"

"And you'll let me know what you have received?"

"I'll write you directly."

The two shook hands, and Saza took his leave.

That same day, after consultation with a man recognized by *connoisseurs* as a prime authority in the matter of lace, who had carefully tested the "Lamoral," Sparber made up his mind definitely that, without the slightest doubt, the lace was genuine, and consequently inestimable.

Thereupon he wrote a few lines to his Excellency the President Count von Iseneck, Actual Privy Councilor, stating that through a peculiar accident he had come into possession of a valuable specimen of lace, which—as it had just now struck him—might turn out to be the article stolen from his Excellency's house a few years before. The letter closed with a courteous request that the President would call.

Count Iseneck, who had just returned from his vacation trip, no sooner got this surprising communication than he drove to the place designated. Sparber told him a plausible story—the truthfulness of which the president had no ground for disbelieving—and after a short preface spread the lace out before him.

"That is indeed the lace stolen from my wife," exclaimed Count Albrecht. "I recognize it—there is no mistake about it."

"Your Excellency will pardon me if I treat the matter in an entirely business-like way, for with me it is business," remarked Sparber, with an obsequious smirk. "Far as I am from doubting your word, in any sort, it devolves upon me to ask the question whether your Excellency has not unconsciously fallen into error, lace is such a very particular thing."

"I can not imagine what you are driving at. But I am absolutely certain of my position. I bought that lace myself at an industrial exhibition, and made it a present to a young lady who was then engaged to me and is now my wife."

Sparber nodded his head approvingly at the end of every sentence that the count spoke.

"Very well, very well. What startles me is the circumstance that in your advertisement, which secures to any one who recovers the lace a reward of three thousand marks—"

"Which will be paid down immediately," interposed the president.

Sparber again nodded an assent, while he smilingly closed his eyes, and then continued: "But the advertisement says the lace is imitation—"

"Quite right!" interrupted the president. "It is most assuredly a masterpiece of imitation—so perfect, that it might deceive an expert."

"Not me, though, your Excellency," grinned Sparber. "This lace is genuine."

"You are mistaken, sir," said the president, quietly. "The real, genuine lace—the historical original—the so-called 'Lamoral,' is to be found in the Kypstein collection, and belongs to Prince von Engernheim. The one here is the imitation that created quite a sensation among art lovers and amateurs about nine years ago, in the winter of 1874 and 1875, when shown in the industrial exhibition, and, as was remarked before, I purchased it for a present to my betrothed. Your error, for that matter, is natural enough, since, according to the verdict of all *connoisseurs*, the imitation has attained to the very highest grade of perfection."

Sparber had quietly left the count to have out his say, and, just as before, continued his smiling assent.

"May I presume to ask your Excellency one question?" said he, in a humble tone. "What price did you pay for the lace?"

"Twelve thousand marks, if I recollect rightly."

"Well, your Excellency, for this lace I am perfectly willing to pay you double that on the spot, and make a good bargain at that."

The president looked up in astonishment.

Sparber continued, in his obsequious manner: "This lace is as real as gold! I will take it at that price, and pay for it. Perhaps

its twin may be in the Kypstein collection of Prince Engernheim ; that I do not dispute. I only say and repeat, *this* lace is genuine. And if an artistic imitation has been stolen from your Excellency, then there is another, a third specimen of this lace. This is not it. For this one is real."

"I do not know what you are driving at. I can only repeat that you are in error."

"The error can easily be cleared up, your Excellency. As soon as the idea forced itself upon me that this lace would prove to be identical with that stolen from your Excellency, I forthwith informed your Excellency of it. I am no receiver of stolen goods."

"And I have to thank you for your promptness."

"Not at all ; it was my bounden duty. And yet it is impossible to hand out to your Excellency something that, as a *connoisseur*, I know positively to be different from what was stolen from your Excellency. That, you say, was a modern imitation, but this in my possession is old and genuine. Your Excellency thinks I am deceived, but I am sure of the contrary. There is nothing left for it but to refer the matter to the decision of an expert whose verdict we must admit to be final."

"To that I am perfectly agreed."

"Allow me to make the proposition that we deposit the lace with some person of official authority—a notary, I suppose, would do—pending the settlement of the disputed question by reference to an expert."

"Very well."

"I herewith commit the lace to your Excellency's charge, and beg of you to have affixed the signature of the party acting on your behalf, and to be so good as to have handed me, through him, a certificate with the recognition of my rights of ownership, barring the restriction imposed by the circumstances. Here, your Excellency."

While he was thus speaking, Sparber had folded up the lace and laid it in a portfolio, which he politely handed to the president.

"Thank you, sir," answered the president. "I can not withhold from you the testimony that you have endeavored throughout to conduct this matter in a way worthy of a judicious and honorable man of business. The desired certificate shall be handed to you this very day. The rest will speedily be settled in conformity with the opinion of an expert. Good-day, sir."

Sparber attended the president to his carriage. He insisted

upon bearing the portfolio himself, in order to save his Excellency that trouble.

With a low bow he took leave of the count as he rolled away in his carriage. A few hours later he obtained from the Councilor of Justice Felix Quintus, the certificate duly signed and sealed.

When Saza was made acquainted by his former partner with the particulars of the above interview—when he heard that properly the real lace should be found in Prince Engernheim's Kypstein collection, but had been stolen from the strong box of Countess Iseneck, he shouted for joy.

Good Count Iseneck! He suspected nothing of the truth, which was perfectly transparent to the baron. Countess Juliane had an uncontrollable passion for lace, one that had been recognized by him, too, in earlier days. That good man had made her a present of imitation lace, while the noble gallant had exchanged it with her for real. That was, indeed, the present of a princely lover, unostentatious and magnificent.

That lace! Never had a more costly rope been twisted for the gallows! And the whole ship's crew of them should kick the beam, if they did not settle with him in a rational and respectable fashion!

He seated himself at his desk and wrote a little article. He must have been well pleased with his work, for he smiled incessantly while he wrote. He forwarded the article to the printing-office, and had the type set up. When the proof came he laughed again.

"Prince Ulrich has not answered you this time, either," said he, mockingly, to Bertha, "Well, now, he will answer you, depend upon it. Sit down, my dear, and write."

And he dictated to Bertha a second epistle, which—"registered as a mutual bond"—was forwarded to his Highness Prince Ulrich von Engernheim, Hotel Royal.

CHAPTER VII.

THE COURSE OF SCANDAL.—WHAT BECOMES OF ROSE.

PRINCE ULRICH long hesitated as to whether or not he should open the letter addressed in a handwriting already familiar to him.

Finally, he read it, and was glad that he had done so. For the affair seemed now to be complicated in a manner that threatened to forbid his maintaining the position of utter ignorance, which he had hitherto assumed. He was utterly at a loss as to how he should act. The matter excited him to such a degree that his mind failed him, and he saw himself put into the predicament of having to draw a third person into his confidence.

His thoughts turned, in the first place, to the State Attorney von Dörenborn, but he was too young for him; then to the Councilor of Legation von Berwitz; but here, again, he was too intimately associated to the Countess Juliane, and might possibly guess the truth, although the prince was firmly resolved to repeat no name in laying the case before him.

Finally he hit upon the very man he wanted.

The Councilor of Justice Felix Quintus was an old crony of his. Formerly Ulrich had frequently come in contact with him at the club, and been peculiarly prepossessed by the gay, polished manners of a man of great repute as a distinguished jurist. Quintus was a sharp-witted man, thoroughly versed in the ways of the world, and yet wholly upright, who lived in the world and for the world, and would surely know some way of extricating the prince from the difficulties of his situation. He forthwith looked him up.

The councilor of justice was sincerely glad to be allowed to place his services at the prince's disposal; and, when he learned that the affair was of a thoroughly confidential nature, he led him into his private cabinet after he had given orders that no one was to be admitted. The two men sat opposite each other. Heavy curtains and thick carpets excluded outer sounds, and permitted not a breath of the conversation carried on in it to escape.

"A dangerous set of extortioners," began the prince, "is making the attempt to fasten upon my heels. For a series of years I have visited a great deal at a certain house. The lady of the house had a partiality for me, and her maid seems to have become aware of the fact that I paid her mistress a few secret visits. Now, this maid has been punished on account of theft. After her release from imprisonment in some way, I know not how, she fell in with Baron Emmerich von Saza."

"Good heavens, you don't say so!" exclaimed the councilor of justice, involuntarily throwing up his hands and then letting them drop upon his knee.

"You know him, I presume," continued Ulrich. "She advised with him, and, evidently under his dictation, wrote a first letter, which I may not show to you, because names are given in it."

"Very well."

"This person, for the guarding of her secret, demanded a sum that she did not specify, it is true, but implied was to be something worth talking about. The letter was adroitly worded, so as to cloak well its extortionate intent. I did not answer that letter."

"A fortunate thing that you did not."

"Well, I have just received a second letter."

"That was to be expected. And this second one will not be the last."

"In order to make the matter intelligible, I must further explain that the lady of whom I spoke has been robbed of her lace. Years before her husband had made her a present of some modern imitation lace. I was accidentally the owner of real lace that the imitation closely resembled. We made an exchange. No one had any need to know about it. This real lace, then, was stolen, while all the family connections supposed it to be the false article."

"I understand."

"To this there is reference made in the following letter that I want to call your attention to:

"BERLIN, *Sunday, September 9, 1883.*

"YOUR HIGHNESS has not, it is true, found time to reply to my most humble communication of the 1st ultimo, and yet I find myself again under the necessity of addressing myself to your Highness. On my master's table I accidentally found and read the following article, which is to certainly appear in the next number of 'The Advocate.' Now, I should like to spare her who used to be my good mistress so great a trouble, and, inasmuch as the baron sets great store by me, I might be able to induce him to suppress it if I begged him very hard. But I do not know, you see, whether this meets your views, your Highness, and, to avoid any misunderstanding, I must first speak with your Highness. As a matter of course, I would make no charge for this trifling service, nor consent to receive compensation in any form. The simplest plan would be for your Highness to do me the high honor of paying me a visit.

"Your most obedient servant."

"Then follows the name."

"May I read the article, the proof of which was inclosed to you?" asked the councilor of justice.

"Certainly; here it is."

When the jovial councilor set about serious business his usually bright, well-shaved face assumed a surprisingly stern, almost forbidding expression. His brow became fairly clouded now as he slowly read the article with close attention.

"The thing is very plain," said he, after he had finished reading and handed the slip back to the prince. "The forwarding of the proofs of a threatening article previous to publication is one of the favorite manœuvres of these poisonous sheets. In this way most hush-money is extorted. The letter dictated to the girl was to entice your Highness into the trap. Just as soon as you give your consent, my prince, to have any transaction whatever with this crew their game is already half won. At the right moment Saza would, of course, interpose and represent the girl's interests. My opinion is that you had better do nothing at all in the matter, my prince. Pay whatever sum you chose you could not thereby purchase exemption from these leeches—no, not though you gave them all you possess. From the minute that you begin to pay those people have you in their hands. So that is not to be done in any case. Well, perhaps the stroke might be parried if we should bring suit for extortion. But I should not advise that either, for it seems to me that the charge could not be well enough substantiated as yet—not, at least, by means of the letter that you have shown me—and then in a lawsuit names would have to be produced, and the scandal started by the little sheet would grow incalculably, the remedy proving worse than the disease. My advice would be this: That your Highness pursue the even tenor of your way, without giving yourself the least concern about the matter. Let the noble Saza slander you as much as he chooses. Who reads the stuff he writes? And, after he has read it, who gives any thought to it? And what do the readers say? 'What, a new libel! this time directed at Prince von Engernheim.' That is what they say, giving it the weight it deserves. To be sure, there may be mischievous people who take delight in such tales and circulate them. But what harm can that do your Highness? Not a word of it will ever reach you unless you choose. Who will venture to speak of it to your Highness? Nobody. And I must say that in this regard the sum of all wisdom seems to me embodied in that trivial old saying, 'I'll not bemoan

what is unknown.' What can a Saza do against a Prince von Engernheim—a notorious prison-bird against a true nobleman? Let the man write what he pleases, and in every number. Your calm indifference will put his activity to shame. Nothing is to be feared from this pack of knaves when you are fearless, everything when you are afraid."

"I thank you," said Ulrich. "What you say coincides with my feeling and my taste. It is a great comfort to me that my views are confirmed by those of a man of your approved judgment. Once more, thank you."

With a warm pressure of the hand, the prince took his leave.

In the next number of "The Advocate," that "Journal of the Oppressed," there appeared at the head of the local column, in bold type, the following article:

"LACE.—Nothing new under the sun! Good Ben Akiba is right forever. You know the story of what happened a few years ago in Paris. A widower, after he had recovered somewhat from his grief for the loss of a very beautiful wife, carried to the jeweler a set of imitation pearls, of which he had made her a present. The jeweler examined it, and offered ten times its original price. The imitation pearls that he had given her had turned into real ones!

"Explanation of the phenomenon—the charming deceased had an intimate friend.

"This touching tale has found an amusing counterpart in this very proper metropolis of ours—so much the more amusing as there is no death to be mourned over in this case.

"All the parties concerned are living, and we hope have a long time to live yet.

"A loving husband of ripe years makes his youthful wife a present of some very beautiful imitation lace. That lace was stolen. After the lapse of a long time, in a peculiar way, it comes to light again from the folds of an old mantle. And, lo! the Paris pearl-miracle renews itself. The imitation lace that had been stolen had turned into real!

"How is this to be explained?

"The former owner of the genuine lace had also been a friend of the family.

"Who is it that laughs?

"Our story is a tip-top one in every sense of the word, and who-

ever wants to verify it must look within the circle of the cream of our 'upper ten.'

"We mean to collect some more piquant details—then we may be allowed to speak more plainly. So, expect a continuation in our next number."

This article was much talked about, people cracking their brains puzzling to find out who was meant. Rosina de Meauclair accidentally learned of its existence. She at first smiled over it as all the rest had done. But her curiosity became excited, and after she had got a sight of the paper she smiled no more. The reference to the old cloak set her to thinking.

She summoned her well-disposed banker, told him, in closest confidence and under the oath of secrecy, that she was about to be married to a rich American, and wanted to leave Berlin without attracting attention; had her funds cashed, packed up her things in all privacy, and begged her prudent and obliging friend to undertake the auctioning off of her furniture. The accommodating man declared himself to be ready and glad to oblige her, heartily regretted the sudden departure of his amiable friend, knew how to appreciate the confidence reposed in him, and was the only one to further the departure of Fräulein Rosina de Meauclair.

With the next fast steamer of the North German Lloyd that gracious young lady sailed from Bremen to New York. Her Berlin friend settled her affairs in the most conscientious way possible.

The number of "The Advocate" referring to the lace was sent to Count Albrecht von Iseneck, as well as to Prince Ulrich, with a red line calling attention to the article. The president's stern features acquired a dark and sinister expression as he read it.

Since his return from his vacation trip he had only been able to see his wife a single time, and then found her condition critical. She had not responded to his greeting, had jumped up from her work abruptly, and then with flushed cheeks took refuge in a corner. From there she had begged to be let alone, in a soft tone at first, then in a louder one, and finally in one amounting to a shriek. The president found it impossible to pacify her, and in painful excitement was compelled to withdraw. He consulted the distinguished surgeon Dr. Lohausen, and with true concern that gentleman had felt compelled to communicate to him the fact that the necessity for removing the countess to an institution for patients suffering from

nervous and mental maladies grew continually more urgent. The physician, however, perfectly coincided with the husband in his opinion that they should proceed to this extremity only at the last moment.

Count Albrecht could take no counsel with his unhappy wife. He put on his hat and repaired to the adjacent Hotel Royal.

Ulrich was playing with his boy when the president's card was handed to him.

"Conduct the gentleman into the small drawing-room."

Ulrich gave the boy one more kiss, smiled on Alix, and stepped into the next room, closing the door after him.

The gentlemen exchanged polite but formal greetings. Ulrich put forward a chair, and begged the count to take a seat. When, after a few words, the latter drew out the newspaper from his pocket, the prince interposed with a smile, saying:

"I beg pardon for interrupting. I have known of that rascally trick for almost eight days. I was to pay hush-money to the editor. When I explain to you that the editor is Baron Emmerich von Saza, you will certainly agree with me in thinking that it would be unworthy of us to answer it otherwise than by our contempt."

"It is not at all in my way either to bandy words with such rabble. The writer himself—since I now know who he is—I should treat exactly as you do, my prince. What startles me is the subject selected by the wretch. My wife's stolen lace has, indeed, come to light, and about the question as to whether it is genuine lace or its imitation—in other words, if it is the identical article I gave my wife or some other—a diversity of opinion prevails, which is to be shortly settled by the opinion of an expert. Of course, I have not allowed my mind to accept for a moment so malicious a representation. And it was only on that point that I wanted to ask for information."

"Yes, the lace stolen from the Countess Juliane was none other than the genuine."

"What!" exclaimed the president in utter astonishment, and his features grew stony. All the blood seemed to leave his face.

"Yes, indeed!" continued the prince, with bitterness. "Those rascals seem likely to gain their end. To think of such a scamp plunging a family into misery and despair! I beseech you, count, to listen to me calmly. I knew your countess's remarkable passion for lace, and, as you know, placed the genuine 'Lamoral' at her disposal to compare it with her imitation. When the countess

wanted to restore to me my property, I could but see what a struggle it cost her to part with it, and reflecting what a matter of indifference it was whether the one or the other was lying in the glass case of the Kypstein collection, I begged the countess to keep the genuine for a while, and to give me the imitation. It was absolutely no gift—it was a loan. Only on the express condition that I would take back the lace could I persuade the countess to accept my offer. But ere this exchange could take place her press was broken into, and the lace stolen. This harmless little act of friendly courtesy is now perverted so as to give rise to the most disgraceful suspicions. It grieves me that the slander seems to be making its impression even upon you."

"I have every disposition to believe you," said the president, moodily; "for it would be a horrible thing if you were speaking here not the simple truth, but something else, constrained by gallantry! I *will* not doubt! But I am in a singularly painful situation. The tongue of slander has possession of the thing now, and you know its fatal power as well as I do. They are not going to be content with this first stroke of villainy. You read what was said—a continuation of the chapter was announced. Both of us have a name and reputation to guard from pollution."

"That is the very thing; it is precisely our name and reputation that pledge us not to stoop to answer these vile calumnies. We can not enter into discussion with 'The Advocate,' nor demand satisfaction of a Saza. It is a misfortune to be attacked by such a pack of hounds, but it is no disgrace."

"Pardon me, prince, but that is not my view of the matter. An insult is an insult. The means for warding it off are, indeed, different. If circumstances forbid my seeking satisfaction in my own person, then I turn for redress to the law; there is no fellow so mean that I should be ashamed to hand over to the chastisement of justice. I understand the position that you take, but it is not mine, and I shall go my own way."

The count had risen from his seat. The positiveness of his assertion forced upon the prince the conviction that any attempt to bend the will of this old man would be utterly futile. He acknowledged the president's farewell by a low bow, made in profound silence.

Alix was still playing with their boy. Ulrich rejoined those dear ones, but carried with him a heavy heart.

Baron Emmerich von Saza was not at all satisfied with himself. He had to accuse himself of overshooting the mark. He ought to have postponed the publication of the lace article. He had shot away his powder too soon. Oh, how vexatious it all was! He had not as yet squeezed one dime out of the prince, and now it was very questionable if anything at all would accrue from the venture. The scandal was made—the bomb had exploded. The newspapers said that Prince Ulrich von Engernheim was speedily to receive his appointment as ambassador. So he had hit wide of the mark—all had been in vain, and he had fooled away in a manner unaccountably foolish the finest opportunity of making a really grand stroke.

The baron was furious with himself and the whole world, but most of all with the prince. The affair had blown over—at least, Prince Ulrich must be under that impression.

The baron was in such a mood as this when a letter was handed him from Count Albrecht von Iseneck, in which he was asked if it were correct that he was the author of that "Lace" article, in the number of "The Advocate" for September 15, 1883, and whether in that article reference was made to what had occurred in the Iseneck palace the night of the robbery, and its consequences. The president purposed to bring a suit for slander against the author of that calumny, and if that person were not a coward let him stand forth.

The baron answered evasively. The article had most assuredly been written and published by him, the undersigned, and the tale told there did, indeed, hint at occurrences that had taken place in the Iseneck family. He looked forward to the suit with composure and tranquillity of soul, but, if the president would accept advice, he would counsel him to defer his suit for a few days, and wait until he should have seen the next number of "The Advocate," which would furnish him with infinitely better material for its foundation.

Count Albrecht von Iseneck waited. The next morning Saza sent to press the assassin-like pages of his second article.

He had lighted the match that ignited the fuse; it might now slumber cozily until next Sunday evening, when the explosion would take place and be the occasion of blowing sky-high the families of Engernheim and Iseneck. They had not wanted to hear, those proud fools, but they should feel!

CHAPTER VIII.

ULRICH AND ALIX PART.

ON Sunday evening, September 23, 1883, great excitement prevailed in Berlin society, and it was an article that appeared in a low and despised newspaper that caused this unusual stir. The newspaper-venders were fairly besieged by applicants for the number referred to, who paid for it ten—yes, twenty—times as much as its ordinary price. This unexpectedly great success of the article occasioned the smirking, smiling proprietor of "The Advocate" to put the form on the press again about noon, and to have printed a new edition of ten thousand copies. He himself was in the office, and smilingly stroked his stubborn black mustache when he saw how the newsboys pushed and elbowed one another in their efforts to gain possession as speedily as possible of the still damp sheets, for which purchasers were waiting with hungry avidity.

Thus ran the article :

"HIS HIGHNESS THE LACE-PRINCE.—Our last article upon that delightful transformation of imitation lace into real has had its effect. Those whom we wanted to hit have been hit, and no mistake. The author who had his own good reasons for calling no names has been accused of cowardice, and threatened with being sued for slander.

"They will not again dare to accuse him of cowardice. This article bears the full signature of its author, who at the same time admits the authorship of the former one on 'Lace.' As to slander, let the following statement of facts speak for itself :

"After coming out with my own name, there is no longer any cause for concealing the names of those who play the chief parts in this comedy of errors.

"We shall, then, be as plain as can possibly be desired.

"His Excellency the Privy Councilor and President Count Albrecht von Iseneck several years ago, made a present to his wife Countess Juliane, *née* Wiking, who is much his junior, of an artistic imitation of a famous old lace mantle.

"The young countess, meanwhile, does not seem to have testified proper gratitude for this beautiful present. At all events, she

profited by the quite frequent absences of her husband to receive the visits of an interesting young gentleman friend at such unwonted hours as are inadmissible for the reception of gentlemen's visits by young ladies; and this, too, after she had contrived to rid herself of the troublesome proximity of her maid.

"This gentleman was his Highness Prince Ulrich von Engernheim, Lord of Biesingen and Kypstein, at the time Councilor of Legation at St. Petersburg.

"Now, in return for the manifold favors which he had received from the countess, his Highness sought to testify his gratitude by exchanging the imitation lace which she had obtained from her husband for the genuine article that happened to be in his possession. So far everything went finely. But soon thereafter the Iseneck palace was broken into, and the lace stolen.

"As ill-luck would have it, this occurred on the same night his Highness paid the lady a visit. When called to testify before a court of justice his Highness swore that he had not been at the Iseneck palace that night.

"Well, her maid saw the prince come into the park.

"I, the undersigned, saw him when he left the park.

"The prince took a drosky in front of the gate opening into Königgrätzerstrasse, and drove to Kroll's Garden. The irregular character of the tracks in the snow of the park was registered by the legal investigators. The prince suffers from a weakness in his left foot, and does not step with an even tread. And to these direct proofs is added that indirect one, which is, perhaps, the most convincing of all—that exchange of the real for the false lace, effected behind the husband's back!

"As witnesses to these facts I summon:

"Countess Juliane von Iseneck, *née* Countess Wiking.

"Augustus Spiddel, formerly a drosky-driver.

"Criminal Commissary Beyer.

"His Excellency Count von Iseneck.

"Dealer in antiquities Sparber.

"And I myself desire to be heard as a witness.

"These indubitable facts his Highness Prince Ulrich von Engernheim denied upon the witness stand.

"I have, therefore, this day made affidavit of the facts before the proper authorities, and make the accusation of perjury against his Highness Prince Engernheim.

"I expect, I demand, that attention be paid to my denunciation. I demand that a legal procedure be instituted against Prince Ulrich von Engernheim for perjury, or against me, the undersigned, for deliberate false testimony. It is one or the other. I demand it as my right.

"And if the principle that equal justice belongs to all is no mere hollow profession, then we shall see what course the affair will take. EMMERICH BARON VON SAZA."

Saza had not allowed himself to be content with the mere publication of this article, which certainly burst upon the community with the force of dynamite. He had, moreover, taken care that this special number of "The Advocate" should be sent to all persons of any consequence whatever; but, first of all, to the prince's superiors and colleagues, to all high officers of justice, and to the bearers of the most distinguished names. By ten o'clock in the forenoon, indeed, the article had been read by every one who had received it.

Only two persons, who were most deeply concerned in the matter, were perfectly unsuspecting, viz., Juliane and Alix.

The effect of the pamphlet was terrific.

All who had had any acquaintance with the Isenecks or Engernheim were shocked, while their intimate friends were intensely distressed. They hoped, to be sure, that the notorious sharper flinging this firebrand had lied. But the assurance of the wretch made the most steadfast somewhat shaky in their confidence. And all admitted that this great scandal was not a thing to be overlooked, but that the authorities must interpose to clear up the relations existing between Prince Engernheim and Countess Iseneck, which were suspected to be of the worst sort.

Early in the forenoon the prince was waited upon by the Councilor of Justice Felix Quintus.

The prince was very pale, but composed. The two men talked together for a long while, and the result of the consultation was that the prince wrote three communications, which the councilor undertook to deliver immediately in person.

In the first, to Count von Iseneck, the prince declared that his lawyers would immediately be put in possession of the facts regarding the matter referring to himself in a recent number of "The Advocate," and until the settlement of the affair in a court of justice, he must decline entering into any personal explanation of that

affair, but, after sentence was pronounced, he would hold himself ready for any explanation that might be desired.

In the second communication to the office, he begged that in view of the knavish trick practiced upon him, and the scandal raised by it, which was incompatible with his official position, an unlimited furlough be granted him until the affair should be cleared by legal investigation.

The third letter was addressed to the minister of justice. The prince put in a most urgent plea that the matter be hurried as much as possible. It was particularly desirable that his examination should be brought forward as speedily as possible, since immediately afterward he wanted to leave Berlin with his family, and repair to Kypstein, whence he would return for the public hearing of the case.

The councilor of justice, who had sued for the honor of being allowed to defend the prince, delivered these epistles himself, and a few hours later their answers were in Ulrich's hands—from Count Iseneck a simple acknowledgment of receipt; from the officer, consent to the furlough for the youthful statesman, in a specially polite and flattering manner, recognizing his eminent services. At the same time, also, the prince received a summons to stand his preliminary examination. The hearing was set for the next morning, although it was Sunday.

Alix asked her husband Saturday evening to go with her to the theatre.

"I am not just in the mood for that, my darling. I do not feel at all like going among strangers."

"Then, we'll stay at home, of course. And you are perfectly right about it. In my desire for amusement I did not reflect that you had not been in good spirits for some days. You appear to be absent-minded and out of sorts, and just now, as I look at you, what has come over your dear, good, cheerful face? Is anything the matter with you?"

She nestled up to him fondly, and her deep-blue eyes were fixed upon his with an expression of unfathomable love.

"I have, indeed, been terribly worried, sweetheart, but do not ask me any questions. It is no want of confidence that sets the seal of silence upon my lips. It is something that lies immeasurably far from you, something that you could not comprehend—believe me, love!"

"I do believe you entirely and forever."

"You may trust me, indeed. I have been thinking whether it would not be best to ask for my furlough to be prolonged, that I might go back with you and the boy to Kypstein, and spend two more weeks there while this lovely autumn weather lasts."

"That would be delightful—"

"There is nothing very urgent going on in the office now, and I do not believe that any difficulties are going to be made. And just let us three be ensconced safely there in our old Kypstein nest, the vexations of the world can not reach us, and I'll be once more the merry fellow I used to be."

"Do so; do it directly, dearest Ulrich. For your sake and mine, too. Nowhere else in the whole world is it so beautiful. I'll nurse you, and soon make you forget the horrid things that vex you. What use have we for other people? We can get along well without them—without the simpletons, or the wise ones either, for that matter. If I had my way, we would set off this very evening."

"Not this evening, but to-morrow, may be."

Alix joyfully flung her arms around her beloved husband, who strained her to his heart and kissed her brow. In an adjoining room, the door to which stood open, their little boy was exercising his lungs with pretty baby prattle, every now and then laughing aloud with glee, while he played with his nurse,

Ulrich forgot all the torturing anxieties of the last few days, and the burden of all that had pressed upon him so sorely was lifted for the time being.

Councilor Quintus came to tea that evening, and the two had a long business interview. The next morning he was examined by an officer of justice.

The Attorney for the Commonwealth was Briesen, before whom he had been examined on the same subject years before at the time of the robbery. The examiner read the deposition then given. The prince persisted in the general statements made at that time.

On one point, however, he had become doubtful—he could not exactly recall whether he had gone on foot the whole way from Baron von Heddersdorf's house to Kroll's or had made use of a drosky. Neither could he now say positively whether he had gone straight to Kroll's or made a circuit. His former representation corresponded exactly with his recollection of the circumstances; but, at the same time, the possibility of unwitting error existed. The

statement of the "Advocate" that he had been seen to take a drosky had startled him.

With this reservation and the alterations necessitated thereby, as also with the exact designation of personalities borne witness to by these individual facts, the testimony that he had borne before was repeated in everything essential—and with this his hearing ended. Attorney Briesen took leave of his Highness with the same respect as heretofore.

The Attorney for the Commonwealth wrote out a summons for the following witnesses, viz., Director Hillstadt, Miss Francesca Lessen, ballet-dancer at the Royal Opera, and Secretary of Legation von Berwitz, then closed his portfolio and muttered to himself :

"If it should only turn out that the rascal Von Saza is not right ! For, if he is right, the prince could hardly have acted differently. Our knowledge is mere patchwork, and our best laws are, too. A devilish affair !"

The same day, in the evening, Ulrich and his family journeyed back to Kypstein.

The landscape had donned its full autumn garb. Cheerful green had become scarce and pale, the wooded heights having assumed a bronzed and brownish hue, which greatly enhanced the brilliant red of the accacias and wild grape-vines, and brought into bold relief the light yellow of the decaying foliage of the nut-trees. The paths were already strewn with fallen leaves. Even the rays of the sun shone with a deeper, redder light. The evenings grew longer. With calm resignation, without gruesome timidity, but not without melancholy, nature, having dropped her bloom, advanced to meet the winter.

Amid this wondrous peacefulness repose came to Ulrich's heart.

Here in the quiet country, far from the hateful traffic of men, in hourly communion with sweet, unsuspecting Alix and their enchantingly simple little boy, Ulrich recovered his spirits ; for perpetual anxiety about the entangled state of his personal affairs and the issue likely to result had deeply preyed upon him, although he had struggled with all his might to overcome his despondency and avoid giving outward expression to it. Here he gradually recovered heart.

He believed firmly and immovably in a universal, even-handed justice that held an exact balance between the deed done and its reward or punishment, although human discernment is often not

clear enough to recognize when the little scale-pointer stands perpendicularly, having found its fulcrum; and yet he often asked himself: "Is not the punishment which I have endured out of proportion to the sin committed? The unspeakable anguish of spirit which deprives me of all tranquillity in my enjoyments, which allows me not a single minute of unclouded happiness, which coldly and sternly forces itself in between me and mine; and this agony of seeing a secret that duty forbids me to divulge dragged through the mire of the streets in the most insolent manner by the hand of a reprobate; and the humiliating, tormenting impotence as regards a poor woman who has to suffer on my account, and whose heart-rending frailty is continually brought up before my soul by inexorable conscience; and, finally, to see my name brought into connection with a commonplace crime that is threatened with the most degrading of punishments—that name which has maintained its spotless purity through eight hundred years, bearing aloft the escutcheon of my forefathers, with its device, a blazing sun, and the proud motto, 'It sets that it may rise again'—is all this not enough? Has not the crime which I committed in the intoxication of youthful levity and indiscretion been expiated? Is Fate inexorable and guilt never to be blotted out?"

"Ah," said he, upon one occasion, to Alix, with a sad smile, as they sat side by side on the terrace talking to one another, and the dense fog, coming up from the river, spread a shining veil over the valley, besides causing the little village in the dell likewise to vanish almost entirely from the sight, "would that we were upon some solitary, uninhabited island in the middle of the ocean! My good father was wiser than I could comprehend at the time, when, without being anything of a misanthrope, he separated himself from mankind, and confined himself exclusively to acquaintance with works of art. They are incapable of baseness."

"So far as I am concerned, we might set sail to-morrow for that unknown, solitary port," replied Alix. "With you and the boy I could live and make myself at home anywhere."

They often recurred to this conversation. Ulrich secretly planned, in fact, something like a long journey to a distant part of the world, which would take him from home for a long, long time. He could not, however, speak decidedly about this, for he had to await the development of matters at Berlin, and these were coming to a crisis.

On the first of November there came to Prince Ulrich from Berlin a copy of the complaint made against him by the Attorney of the Commonwealth Von Dörenborn, together with the summons to present himself before the jury at Berlin on November 12th to answer the charge of "perjury."

Quintus wrote to him that it would be highly advisable for his Highness and himself to confer several times together beforehand, although not imperatively necessary, he hoped, since he supposed that he was perfectly prepared to answer the accusation.

The prince responded that he would set off on the 10th inst., reach Berlin on the evening of the 11th, about ten o'clock, and take a room in the Hotel Royal.

Alix was much disturbed when she learned from Ulrich at breakfast that he would be compelled to take a little trip within the next few days in which she could not join him.

"I'll not stay an hour longer than is absolutely necessary, I promise you that, my darling. In Berlin I shall be busy from early in the morning until late in the evening. We would not see anything of each other there. We would only be together in the carriage and coupé during the eight-and-forty hours of the journey there and back; and really that would be rather too severe upon you."

"Oh, you need not consider that."

"And only think of the boy! We could not take him with us in this dreadful weather, and you would find it hard to be separated from him and suffer uneasiness on his account."

"You are right. I'll be reasonable, and stay quietly here. How long will you be gone?"

"Let us calculate: I'll set off on the evening of the 10th, reaching Berlin on the 11th, also in the evening. I hope to get through with my business there in two days, which would be the 12th and 13th; then I could set off for home early on the 14th, and reach here early in the day, the 15th."

"That makes almost a full week. It will seem long to me."

"In order to divert your thoughts it might be well to invite papa and mamma here. They have been long expecting an invitation, I think, and would gladly bear you company. Then we can keep them, perhaps, until Christmas. What do you think of it?"

Alix was highly gratified at the proposition, and the very same day a joint letter from Ulrich and Alix went off to Menthin for the Prince and Princess von Eyckhof. Ulrich had already exchanged

several cordial, confidential letters with his parents-in-law on the subject of the Berlin affair. On the 10th of November, which was the morning of Ulrich's departure, they arrived at Kypstein, delighted at seeing once more their happy children and charming grandchild.

In the course of the afternoon Ulrich took aside, first the prince, and then Carola, and implored them fervently not to betray to Alix the true cause of his absence, through inadvertence or surprise, and to avoid everything that could give her the least uneasiness. On the evening of the 12th instant or, at latest, on the morning of the 13th he would send a special dispatch to the prince announcing the result of the proceedings before the jury.

"Why so many confidences?" exclaimed Alix, with affected indignation. "It is still a long way off from Christmas, and we ought to pass these last hours sociably together."

"These last hours!" objected Prince Engelbert. "Why, to hear you talk, one would think that Ulrich's absence was to last for months and years."

"Yes, to be sure, it is but for a week!" replied Alix. "And yet it is long enough. You see it is the first time that we have been separated since our marriage."

"You had promised me to be reasonable," said Ulrich, coaxingly, while he patted her on the cheek. "Now, be so, pray, out of love for me."

His wife's large blue eyes were filled with tears. She hid her face on Ulrich's breast, and whispered:

"I am ashamed! I am a child. I do not know how it is, but I feel very sad. Don't be angry with me. I can not help it. Don't be angry with me!"

Ulrich caressingly stroked her lovely golden ringlets, speaking to her in the tenderest manner, and the tones of his rich, manly voice seemed to exercise a soothing influence upon her. Nevertheless, the parting was hard upon her.

It puzzled her to see her father and mother look so grave as they pressed the hand of their son-in-law with such evident emotion, as he stood with his foot already upon the carriage step.

Alix and Ulrich embraced each other most affectionately. The coachman closed the door and sprang to his seat upon the box. Ulrich leaned out of the window for another long, last kiss from her and the kicking boy.

"Go on!" exclaimed Prince Engelbert.

Alix sprang aside. The coachman cracked his whip, and the horses trotted off.

From the terrace they got many a glimpse of the carriage as it followed the windings of the road, and thence they watched it for a long time. Then they waved their handkerchiefs and saw something white flutter in the distance.

CHAPTER IX.

THE TRIAL OF THE PRINCE.

IN concert with other officers of justice high in authority, Director Raumer, who had to conduct the proceedings in court, deeming it superfluous to make a spectacle of a government officer of princely blood unfortunately brought before the bar, accused of a grave crime, had accordingly arranged for Prince Ulrich von Engernheim's trial to take place in the small juror's court-room.

The crowd had been a colossal one, and the disappointment was proportional; for only the fewest possible permits for admission had been honored. The president had taken it upon himself to exercise discrimination as to the small number of cards of admission that could be granted, and in their distribution he showed remarkable tact. The arrangements were also made which were necessary to prevent a collection of the curious before the hall of session and a mob in front of the court-house. Thus it was only a small, and certainly a select circle which began to assemble at eight o'clock in the morning in the space railed off for spectators, and which was speedily entirely occupied.

The jurors were all in place by a quarter before nine.

A few minutes before nine a simultaneous movement of curiosity and sympathy went through the now fully occupied section of the hall, behind that portion set apart for those who were to take part in the proceedings.

Prince Ulrich von Engernheim appeared in company with his advocate, Councilor Felix Quintus. He was dressed in a full suit of black, the double-breasted coat being buttoned up to the throat,

and he held his hat in his hand. He seemed to be perfectly quiet and composed.

The tall, powerful, manly form, the easy and distinguished bearing, the noble contour of the head with the short-cut, fair hair and full beard—all this was perfectly familiar to the large majority of this assembly, and yet to-day the effect was as of something strikingly novel, and was surveyed by gentlemen and ladies with particular attention. The prince either did not or would not notice that he was the object of this scrutinizing regard.

He stood with his face averted from the place where the spectators were, by the side of his lawyer, and was in earnest conversation with him.

When shortly after nine, the Attorney for the Commonwealth Von Dörenborn—his old friend and club-mate—took his place, both avoided any meeting of the eye; the prince opened the little door that led to the space railed off for the accused, and seated himself upon the chair adjacent to the judges, behind his own lawyer, somewhat sidewise, so that he could turn his face toward the seats for both the judge and jury, but of the spectators he saw nothing; and neither could his face be seen, save by a small number, and he rested his chin upon his hand.

Immediately afterward the court opened its session. The prince arose at the salutation of the president and his coadjutors. These took their places behind the green table, and the president opened the court.

After going through with the usual formalities, the selection and swearing in of the jury, the summoning of witnesses, among whom the name of Baron von Saza called forth an involuntary movement, the comprehensive indictment was read aloud.

This rested, first of all, upon the direct accusations of Bertha Schmider and Baron von Saza—upon the positive affirmation of the former that the prince had entered the park about one o'clock, on the night of the 21st and 22d of December, and the just as positive assertion of the latter, that he saw the prince leave the park about half-past two. Before the Königgrätzerstrasse gate the prince took a drosky, urged on the driver to proceed rapidly, and for the short ride to Kroll's paid him the unprecedentedly high fare of ten marks. Here was called in as witness the former coachman, A. Spiddel. The declaration of the accused, that he had come to this spot on Königgrätzerstrasse, in going from Behrenstrasse where he had

passed the evening, on his way to Kroll's, must be rejected as unsatisfactory because it was entirely out of his way.

These slanderous accusations were followed by others, the proof for which seemed yet stronger. In the snow of the park sharp impressions of the footsteps of this nocturnal intruder had been found; these must have been made after one o'clock, for up to that time the snow had been falling uncommonly fast. These tracks were of a peculiar nature, evidently made by a lame person. In the park chamber, too, near to the door opening upon the park, and upon the flag-stones in the neighborhood of that door the same wet tracks had been traced. In the earlier suit against Hotte and his confederates, these tracks had been referred to Wildicke. Wildicke, who had been incontestably the instigator and abettor of the robbery, had, meanwhile, constantly stuck to it, with great positiveness, that he had not come through the park, and has persisted in this assertion up to this moment. There was no imaginable reason why Wildicke, who had confessed the essential, should be so stiff in his obstinate denial of what was comparatively an unessential matter. The assumption which had been allowed to pass at the earlier investigation, viz., that the burglar during the few minutes of the Countess Iseneck's absence from the park chamber had slipped into the palace through this room, and likewise gone away through this apartment, meanwhile having found time to shake the snow off his boots besides freeing himself of his overcoat and hat, taking up these articles again upon his supposed way back—this assumption, we say, upon closer inspection, was too bold a one for credence.

Everything is explained in a much more natural and simple manner if we accept as correct the statements of Bertha Schmider, Saza, and the coachman. Wildicke's persistent denial that the tracks in the snow were his, their peculiar formation being due to the weakness in the prince's left foot, the wet spot on the carpet, the traces of water upon the piano-cover, that incomprehensible circuit in the storm, which the accused represents himself as having taken, and which he did not remember at the time of the first examination, the uncommonly high price for that short drive in a drosky—in a word, everything!

The persecuting attorney regretted that the chief witness in the case, Countess Juliane von Iseneck, was, in the opinion of her physician, in no condition to appear at the trial, and, according to the same high authority, it was highly improbable that she would ever

be able to give testimony. Meanwhile, the evidence of the other witnesses is so decided that the prosecution can well do without appeal to that particular witness.

As to the alibi attempted to be proved by the accused, no special weight was to be attached to it. If one agrees that the accused stayed only a short time, perhaps only a few minutes, in the palace—and this is indeed likely—then the whole artistic edifice, the very art of which may be considered, is in itself not unsuspicious.

After all this, the accused may be thought to have enough to answer for, but on the 15th of April, 1880, in the proceedings against Hotte and his confederates, he had knowingly given false evidence, and in so doing committed perjury.

The president now went into the case proper. The prince arose. A deep stillness reigned through the whole place. The summing up of the evidence was gone through with.

To the question as to whether the accused acknowledged himself guilty of what was laid to his charge, the prince calmly replied, with his full, warm voice, "No, Mr. President."

The hearing was brief. The prince declared that on the night of the robbery, of which he had retained but a dim recollection from reasons wholly unconnected with that event, he had repaired to Kroll's after leaving Baron von Heddersdorff's house. He had gratefully declined Director Hillstadt's invitation to ride with him in his carriage to Kroll's, because after his long journey and detention in the heated atmosphere of the ball-room he had felt the need of fresh air. Therefore he had gone on foot, in spite of the bad weather, the cold, and the violent fall of snow. Whether he had turned into Wilhelmstrasse from Behrenstrasse he could no longer tell. Just as little could he say whether he had gone to Kroll's on foot or taken a drosky on the way. It is possible, too, that, in order to cut short a dispute between the driver and another man wanting to get in, he had called to the coachman, "Drive on fast! you'll get ten marks!" He had given a good fee to many a coachman whom he had found thus almost frozen stiff upon his box, as he sat there exposed to wind and weather. He could not testify positively as to all these little particulars. He had attached no significance to them, and never imagined that he could find himself in a situation to be catechised upon the subject.

"The only thing that I do know positively," said the prince, in conclusion, "is that I never visited her Excellency the Countess von

Iseneck at an unseemly hour and in secret. This could not be, as every one knows who has the honor of that lady's acquaintance. All assertions to the contrary are false and unfounded. As for particulars that I discerned no reason for storing up in my memory, I must refer to the evidence that I gave on a former occasion. I take it that it will be found to agree in what is essential. To-day I should no longer remember all these things if the protocol taken when the impression of what had happened was fresh in my mind had not assisted my memory."

"In this affair certain lace has played a part," then remarked the President. "The prosecuting party puts the question, Whether it be true that the countess have obtained very valuable lace from you without the cognizance of her husband, since a certain significance is held to attach to this transaction. Can you express yourself on that point?"

"Mr. President," said the prince, in agitated tones, "the most innocent transaction, if pushed into a false light by evil-mindedness, may assume every appearance of positive guilt. I should never have presumed to offer the Countess von Iseneck a present of any considerable value. I did, however, lend the countess some lace in my possession, knowing her to be a *connoisseur* in such matters, and, half in jest, kept hers as a sort of pawn. The affair would have been certainly adjusted by a second exchange during my stay at Berlin if my lace had not been stolen from the countess the very day of my arrival. That I am compelled to give publicity to a thing of the sort, absolutely of a private and personal nature, fills me with deep concern, for these things are calculated to compromise a lady who has a full claim to the respect of every one."

And again a subdued murmur ran through the hall.

The prince took his seat. The examination of witnesses began.

The counsel for the defense represented, concerning the witnesses Bertha Schmider, Saza, and Wildicke, that the last was still in the penitentiary, while the others had been convicts, and, not having been yet restored to the rights of citizens, were not in a condition to be sworn, hence their oaths would not be valid. As for Saza, he had been personally aggrieved by the prince, against whom he entertains strong animosity, as is incontestably proved by the scandalous article inserted by him in "The Advocate," which renders his evidence suspicious. The court finally decided that the witnesses above named were not admissible to oath.

Bertha Schmider trembled violently and was much moved when the president, with stern emphasis, warned her that it was her duty to speak the exact truth, even although she were not allowed to speak upon oath. She gave her evidence in a very low, almost inaudible voice, in spite of repeated exhortations to speak more distinctly. She stuck to it that on that particular night, as often before when her husband was from home, about one o'clock, she had seen the prince go into the palace from the direction of the park. During Count Iseneck's absences she usually slept in a dressing-room adjoining the park chamber, but that evening she had been sent by the countess to stay in a remote sleeping-room to the front of the house.

At the instance of the prosecuting attorney, the witness was asked whether she had not written to the countess on a former occasion and obtained from her a considerable sum of money. Bertha answered this question in the affirmative—she had received from her five hundred marks.

Now the counsel for the defense had the witness asked whether she had not demanded more money and had no notice taken of her communication. These questions also were answered in the affirmative.

The same party asked the president if he might be allowed to put a few direct questions to the witness.

"Was not the countess, in general, very kind and generous to her servants?"

"Yes."

"How, then, came you to think of reporting your observations and the like to Saza?"

The witness kept silence.

"Did you not tell Saza what you have just told us?"

"Yes."

"I now ask you what induced you to do this? Did you think that perhaps Saza would know how to get money for you from the countess? Is that so? You must answer me, Bertha Schmider!"

"No, I did not think that. I only just told it to the baron."

"Only just told it? You stood, then, upon a very familiar footing with Baron Saza? By the way, what are your relations to that gentleman? You must know him very well. He has shown you various little attentions—for example, dictating the two letters you sent Prince Engernheim, which are to be found among the rec-

ords. So answer my question, What are your relations to that gentleman?"

"I am the baron's housekeeper."

"Ah, indeed! His housekeeper, are you?" repeated Quintus, with bitter irony. "You mean to imply that you live with that gentleman, and have things in common with him?—May I ask the gentlemen of the jury to note this fact and give it the proper consideration. It very likely furnishes us with the key to many coincidences in the testimony given by this housekeeper and her master."

When the pale, withered Baron von Saza, with his yellow, cadaverous face, upon which meanness had set its stamp, appeared before the bar, the excitement which overpowered the audience at the appearance of this witness was manifested by a general stir. The president tapped upon the bell, and forthwith perfect quiet ensued.

Saza told of his meeting with the prince in Königgrätzerstrasse with great circumstantiality and positiveness. He did not recognize the gentleman whom he saw emerge from the doorway, but he was certain and could not be mistaken in affirming that the same gentleman took away from him drosky No. 1,111, and by after-inquiry of the coachman he had learned that it was Prince von Engernheim.

"The accused admits the possibility of his having taken a drosky in Königgrätzerstrasse," said the president. "The question, therefore, is only whether you saw the accused come out of the Iseneck palace park?"

"That I saw. The prince shut the gate, looked around, went up to the drosky that I had just hailed, got into it and drove off."

"You are certain, then, that you saw the accused come out of the park, through the park gate, on to Königgrätzerstrasse?"

"I saw that most certainly."

"Are there any more questions to be put to the witnesses?"

Councilor Quintus rose to his feet.

"The witness declared just now that he did not recognize the prince, with whose personal appearance he was very familiar—close as he was to him—although his attention must have been peculiarly called to him on that particular evening, or rather night, from the unusual hour at which he emerged from the park. It would seem, then, that it must have been very dark."

"It was a stormy, almost dark, snowy night."

"Ah, indeed! But it does not seem to have hindered Bertha Schmider from recognizing the prince positively—under much more unfavorable conditions, too—from her post of observation on the first floor. The gentlemen of the jury will form their own opinion as to the credibility of Bertha Schmider's testimony! It has therefore been only indirectly, after consultation with the coachman, that the witness could make up his mind that the nocturnal visitor to the park was identical with his Highness the prince?" queried Quintus, with sharpness.

"Not so. I formed this conviction in accordance with my own perceptions and the information received from Miss Schmider, as well as from the coachman."

"The convictions of the witness do not interest us," remarked Quintus, in a lofty tone. "We merely want to learn whether you really saw the prince come out of the park, and whether you recognized him. He did not recognize him. It may well be that he saw somebody come from there, for we know that it was not solitary that night. But the prince he did not see come out. He ingeniously constructed his own prince. That is the point which has been made clear."

The counsel for the defense took up his paper, and as he cast a glance upon the notes there made he asked:

"Do you live with this Schmider?"

"Of course I do, since she is in my service."

"It is precisely as to this relation of service that I would question you. According to what we have heard, the relationship between master and servant seems to be a rather unusual one, so that for the uninitiated it is a matter of doubt whether the gentleman is master or *valet*, and whether the maid is servant or mistress. For, in very sooth, the master seems to have served his servant. Did you not dictate those letters of Bertha Schmider which are to be found among the records?"

Saza was silent. The people listened with breathless attention.

"Mr. President," said Quintus, turning to the court, "have the goodness to call the attention of the witness to the fact that a suit for perjury, under some circumstances, may give rise to another."

"You have heard the question of the defendant," now interposed the president. "It is an important one, and must be replied to. Speak the truth, witness. Every bit of your evidence is of im-

measurable significance. Do not for a moment forget that the honor and freedom of a man is at stake. Although you should have to destroy the honor and freedom of this man through your true evidence, you should, nevertheless, unconditionally speak the truth. But you would be guilty of a grave offense that would be visited by severest punishment at the bar of both divine and human justice, if you should speak falsely—whether it be to the hurt of the accused or to his advantage. It is my duty to impress this upon you, in the most solemn manner. And now answer the defendant's question, Did you dictate to your housekeeper the letters which she sent to the accused ? ”

Saza ruminated an answer.

“Bertha Schmider! Come forward once more!” ordered the president.

Bertha obeyed with tottering feet.

“You have heard what has been said. How about those letters that Prince Engernheim received from you?” asked he, sternly. “Did you write these without anybody's help? Answer truly.”

“No, Mr. President,” answered Bertha, trembling.

“Who helped you with them?”

“The baron.”

“Did he only supervise them, or did he dictate them to you?”

“The baron dictated them.”

“Word by word?”

“Yes, Mr. President.”

“You can take your seat.”

The audience had listened to this dialogue with bated breath. Now again a murmur ran through the densely packed rows of people.

“I have one more thing to ask the witnesses,” remarked Quintus. “May I proceed, Mr. President? Witness Saza, you met his Highness Prince Engernheim once more that night at Kroll's. I should like to learn of you something more concerning that meeting.”

“I met the prince in the box—”

“You met the prince? That is to say, you went to the box wherein the prince was sitting. You looked him up?”

“Well, yes. I bowed, the prince did not notice my bow, whether because he did not observe it, or from other reasons.”

“Pardon me. There is no room for doubt in the matter. His

Highness had certainly seen you, and precisely because he did see you he turned his back upon you without returning your bow."

"Because I thought so at the time I addressed a remark to the prince."

"Exactly so. And what reply did his Highness make?"

"Something evasive."

"Oh, no. The prince told you most emphatically that he would neither exchange salutations with you nor carry on a conversation nor fight a duel with you. In a previous conflict with somebody else, did not a court of chivalry pronounce you unfit to render honorable satisfaction?"

"Mr. President, I appeal to you to protect me, as a witness, from questions of this kind," exclaimed Saza, excitedly.

"It is sufficient for me that you do not answer the question in the negative," remarked Quintus, with inflexible coolness. "This scene, therefore, was enacted in the box at Kroll's theatre on the night of the 21st and 22d of December. You left the box declaring that his Highness should hear from you. Why was not this threat followed up?"

"To such questions I can deign no reply," answered Saza, indignantly.

"Then permit me to come to the aid of your memory. On the next morning, December 22d, you were condemned to six months' imprisonment on account of perfidy. Here was certainly no opportunity allowed for carrying on affairs of honor."

The counsel for the defense sat down, smiling. And again a slight rustling made itself audible. The jurymen also indulged in a few whispered remarks. The baron's sallow visage assumed a greenish hue, his fingers nervously twirled his long mustache, and the veins in his forehead swelled. Evidently he was in a ferment.

"You can take your seat," said the president.

Saza stepped back, quivering, and seated himself on the chair farthest removed from Bertha. He crossed his long legs, excitedly beat upon his knee with his right hand, while his breath came short and quick through dilated nostrils.

The evidence of the honest coachman Spiddel, which Saza had expected to play as his highest trump, produced no effect at all, inasmuch as the prince admitted the possibility of his having ridden to Kroll's in the Spiddel drosky.

The coachman was asked whether he had seen the prince come out of the park?

To this as to many another thing he answered: "But, dear sir, how am I to know that at this late date?" He certainly remembered having received a ten-mark fee for the short drive.

The question of the prosecuting attorney as to whether this was not a very unusual circumstance, he answered in the affirmative. The opposing query of the defendant as to whether the prince, whom Spiddel had often driven, had not always given very generous fees was assented to, with the assurance that he had always waited upon the count. Spiddel stuck to this title, because the count had always been his best fare; he had never given less than a Prussian dollar, but he remembered, too, that the count had never thought anything of throwing a five-mark bill into the bargain.

The Criminal Commissioner Beyer made clear and exact statements as to the peculiar footprints in the snow, and also as to the traces of snow upon the carpet and piano.

With eager expectancy they looked forward to the evidence of Fritz Wildicke, who, dressed in the garb of a convict, was led into the hall between two policemen.

The persistent assertion of the housebreaker that he had only been in Wilhelmstrasse, but not entered the park, bore hardest upon the prince. There was no obvious reason why Wildicke should deny having been in the park, since this denial did not procure him the least advantage; but if Wildicke really had not been in the park—and his assertion to that effect was likely to find greater credence now, after another explanation for those foot-prints in the snow had been found, than before—then it looked badly for the prince's cause.

It was already marvelous enough that accident should have made one lame man confessedly participate in the robbery from the direction of Wilhelmstrasse, and that there should be found in the park the impression of another halting footstep belonging to another party. Now, this peculiarity of gait did pertain to the prince, whom two of the main witnesses for the prosecution affirmed they had seen enter and leave the park, the snow giving testimony to the same. The possibility of a third person with an abnormally shaped foot having to do with the affair was a supposition not to be entertained.

Should Wildicke, then, be believed, when he firmly maintained

that he had not been in the park, the suspicion that the prince had been there would be essentially strengthened.

Until now Quintus had been well content with the progress of the affair. The prince apparently had made the most pleasing impression imaginable upon the jurymen. The two worst witnesses, Bertha and Saza, had been rendered almost innocuous by Quintus himself. He had only Wildicke to dread now. He proposed to ride rough-shod over this inconvenient witness, treating the house-breaker with sovereign contempt, as a miserable, lying wretch utterly unworthy of credence.

But Wildicke prepared for him and for them all the greatest surprise.

When Wildicke caught sight of Councilor Quintus, his zealous old defender, who in a previous case had unselfishly sacrificed to him his time and his energies, he smiled contentedly, and gave him a friendly nod. The councilor was the only person in the room with whom he felt any fellowship, being totally indifferent to all the rest; and there stirred in the hardened sinner a wondrous feeling of gratitude for the one and a knavish desire to play a trick on the others, that now determined the stand he was to take.

Sly Wildicke, who had seen the prince when the suit about the robbery was going on, knew that this gentleman was the individual designated by Bertha as paying her mistress clandestine visits, hence he no sooner saw him on the criminal bench with Councilor Quintus, his tried friend, for an advocate, than he took in the situation at a glance. He winked at the defendant, as though he would say to him: "To-day I'll pay my debt. We'll clear your friend. How will it hurt me?"

The president solemnly exhorted Wildicke to stick to the truth.

Wildicke put on as innocent a face as possible, and promised to do so.

"On the night of the 21st and 22d of December you took part in the robbery committed by Hotte in the Iseneck palace, I believe. You were in Wilhelmstrasse and took the articles that Hotte handed you through the window?"

"That is so, Mr. President."

"Tracks were also discernible in the snow of the park. Hitherto when on trial yourself, both in the preliminary examination and in court, you constantly asserted with great persistency that you

had not been in the park that time, and that the foot-tracks found there were not yours. Do you still stand to those assertions?"

"No, Mr. President!" answered Wildicke, in a loud tone.

This perfectly unexpected contradiction produced a deep impression upon all.

A humming and buzzing passed through the whole hall, the prosecuting attorney starting out of his seat. Quintus, who was taking notes, let his pen drop, and looked up in astonishment.

"You do not seem to have rightly understood me," remarked the president. And slowly, distinctly, and with sharp emphasis upon the important words, he continued: "I ask you whether you were only in Wilhelmstrasse, as until now you have always maintained, or whether you were also in the park, which until now you have constantly denied. So now, once more—"

"I understood you at first, Mr. President," said Wildicke. "Yes, I was in Wilhelmstrasse and also in the park. First in the park, and then in Wilhelmstrasse."

Now the excitement which had taken possession of everybody was hardly to be restrained.

The president was again obliged to have recourse to his bell.

"But why have you always maintained the contrary up to this time?"

"A man that is accused will many a time tell things differently from what they are."

"And are you telling the whole truth now?"

"Yes, indeed, Mr. President."

"Well, then, tell us exactly how it all happened, both as to your going into the park and coming out of it."

"Why, it was exactly as Mr. Beyer and the prosecuting attorney explained it the other time. Exactly so. I opened the park gate with a master-key—"

"About what time?"

"It was certainly after midnight—about half after one, or may be yet later; I did not look to see what time it was. Then I hid myself in the park, and watched to see what the countess would do in her room with the dog. The room was light, and it was dark out of doors. When I saw the countess take the dog into an adjoining room I softly slipped in, for the door from the park into her cham-

ber was not locked. I had on an overcoat and hat. I laid them off, because they hindered me in my work; perhaps, too, I shook off some snow—I don't precisely know."

"But, Wildicke," interposed the president, "that was acting very incautiously, and sounds very improbable. When you stopped in the room in such a superfluous manner the danger of discovery was a very great one; and your things might easily have been noticed. The room was light. You might have been caught directly, or, even if not surprised at once, they would have had the means for proving your identity in their hands."

"All you say is perfectly correct, Mr. President. I just said the same as you do to the gentleman that time, almost word for word—that time, Mr. President, when I wanted to lie out of it; but the commissioner said that things that can not be comprehended happen at every robbery; and the commissioner was quite right. I can not explain it to you, but I did it."

"Go on, then."

"Well, I went softly through the room and opened the *portière*. Again I hid myself in the dressing-room. Then the countess brought in the dog. He sniffed, but did not find me. Soon afterward Hotte came in from the other side, from the hall. The dog snarled, but Hotte knew him well and quieted him; besides, the countess called to the dog from the next room, and bade him be quiet. Now we set to work. This the dog would not suffer. Then the countess called him off. She must, indeed, have heard what we were doing. I softly opened the door to her room. She had just gone out with the dog. I now made haste to be off, took up my things, and ran through the park. Not until then did I put on my overcoat and hat. Then I went through Vossstrasse, and there, it seems to me, I met a gentleman, who might have been that gentleman yonder; but I will not swear to that—what I do not know, that I say nothing about. Well and good, I passed through Vossstrasse to Wilhelmstrasse, where I waited until Hotte announced himself. I had not been able to take anything with me. Hotte had gathered everything up together, and then thrust the whole bundle out of the window to me. There, that is the history of the matter, just exactly as the gentleman sifted it out the first time."

With growing astonishment the prince had listened to this man. He did not know in what way he had won his sympathy. He did not know how much of it all to believe. How came that man, with

bold front, to utter these palpable untruths, thus springing to his rescue and stepping into his shoes?

Ah! the crime that Prince Ulrich had committed, which was preparing for him these abominable hours, must be a frightfully great one if he must now owe his safety from punishment to a criminal, who, smiling, and out of sheer wantonness, in order to cheat justice and its officers, had to commit a new crime—if he, Prince Ulrich von Engernheim, must needs owe his deliverance from the penalty of perjury to a Fritz Wildicke!

The commonwealth's attorney cross-questioned Wildicke keenly, trying to take him by surprise and catch him in his lies. Wildicke, however, was not to be discomposed, and stuck to it. "I lied before; now I am telling the truth."

"But how comes it that you have been practicing deceit all these years, and how can you expect us to believe, all of a sudden, that what you say is true?" said the commonwealth's attorney.

The quick-witted Wildicke gave as his answer, "You see, your honor, that other time I was the accused; then one may lie. Now I am a witness; then one must tell the truth."

"Well, the gentlemen of the jury will know what dependence to place upon the statement of a jail-bird."

"I have been fetched from jail at the instance of the commonwealth's attorney himself—apparently because his honor was of opinion that a man might be punished for housebreaking and nevertheless be able to speak the truth. I have spoken the truth."

Amid general and powerful excitement Wildicke was again led away by the guards, not, however until he had cast a last sly, triumphant glance at his honored councilor of justice.

He had once more enjoyed a jolly hour for the first time in four years. His secret hope that he might, perhaps, get a glimpse of Rose was, alas! unfulfilled.

The president wanted to have a recess before beginning to examine the witnesses for the defense.

Then Quintus, who was anxious to avail himself of the powerful impression made by Wildicke's evidence in favor of his client, arose and said:

"After listening to the witnesses for the prosecution, the gentlemen of the jury will have formed a sufficiently correct opinion of the facts in the case. We propose to dispense with the examination of the witnesses for the defense."

"If the commonwealth's attorney has no objections to make?" asked the president. Mr. von Dörenborn half rose from his seat, and disclaimed any desire to dissent by a gesture. "Have the gentlemen of the jury any?" asked he further. "Are the gentlemen agreed?"

The assessors approved.

"Well, then," announced he, in a clear tone, "the court dispenses with the examination of the other witnesses summoned—viz., Director Hillstadt, Fräulein Francesca Lessen, Councilor of Legation von Berwitz—and dismisses them. Before the prosecuting attorney sums up the case we shall have a recess of an hour. Punctually at a quarter to four the proceedings will be resumed."

The session broke up noisily. The lawyers and jurymen withdrew to their rooms. The auditors streamed out upon the corridors, talking loudly and eagerly, and upon the open square in front of the court-house were surrounded by the curious, who swallowed with avidity every detail of the proceedings that had proved so intensely exciting.

The bitter feeling that universally prevailed against Saza assumed significant proportions.

When the baron came out of court he had to listen to such scornful and threatening remarks that he found himself necessitated to turn back and petition for the escort of a guardsman to insure his personal safety. This only excited passionate young bloods yet more, and loud execrations were hurled at him, and followed him, in spite of his guard, until he sought to escape from these unpleasant demonstrations by retiring into an adjacent restaurant.

There he wanted to seat himself at a table where two young gentlemen were already seated, two chairs being still unengaged.

"I beg pardon," exclaimed one of the gentlemen, springing to his feet, and turning over the chair which Saza was about to take, "these places are taken—by respectable people."

The host, who had meanwhile heard who the newly arrived guest was, stepped up to him, and said, in a subdued voice:

"I must request you to leave my establishment. Nothing will be handed to you here. My regular guests will not associate with you, and I must consider them; so let me beg of you—"

Saza shrugged his shoulders and stepped out into the hall. There he stayed until his attendant had summoned a drosky, and in

this he drove farther into the city, in order to take a bite at a small obscure inn.

The prince waited until the crowd in the corridor had dispersed. Then, accepting the invitation of his lawyer, he followed him into the advocate's room. There they enjoyed a light lunch, smoked a cigar, and chatted until the clerk brought word that the court was about to open its session again.

CHAPTER X.

THE VERDICT.

THE lawyers and jury had already resumed their places. The prince occupied the same seat as before behind his lawyer. The space allotted to the spectators was filled to overflowing. At the tap of the bell silence ensued.

"I pronounce the court to be in session, and the time has now come for the commonwealth's attorney to state the argument for the prosecution," said the president.

The people giving breathless attention, Herr von Dörenborn arose, and thus began :

"GENTLEMEN OF THE JURY: Not one of us has been able to rid himself of the deep, nay, harrowing impression evoked by the occasion of our proceedings. I myself do not hesitate to say freely that I must do violence to my personal feelings in obeying the stern dictate of duty as prescribed for the holder of my office. Loudly and strongly speaks within me the voice of earnest and sincere sympathy with the man against whom I am compelled to appear as an accuser. And if I may not listen to that voice, it is yet powerful enough to impose upon me every possible forbearance in the performance of my stern duty.

"The man whom you see on yonder bench has nothing in common with those decayed and reckless elements of society that threaten the safety of our lives and property, against whose violent or treacherous attacks citizens call upon the state for protection and appeal for help to the strong arm of the law. He has nothing in common with those who have sat upon the same bench before him and will take their place there afterward.

"The accused is sprung from noblest blood. In superabundant measure has Destiny showered upon him all her favors, such as she dispenses only to her prime favorites. Born and living in the lap of luxury, tenderly reared by a noble father, a dignified sense of self-respect belonged to him as the scion of a noble stock; he was accustomed from childhood to do honor to what was honorable, it being constantly instilled into him that he must add to the luster of his lineage by high thinking and noble actions, as the most precious of family treasures; endowed with blooming health, lovable and estimable traits of character, and eminent intellectual gifts that were developed by the finest culture and severe study—all these qualifications were already being used in the service of the state, and promised to redound yet more to her benefit in the future. Such is the man who appears before you to-day charged with breach of the law. He is none other than Prince Ulrich.

"And against this man, from whom at this hour none of us can withhold our warmest, truest sympathies, I must bring an accusation that under our law ranks among the greatest of crimes. Verily, almost superhuman exertions are required to overcome the softness of our impulses. With the smith of Ruhla I have to call out to myself, 'Be hard!' I dare not turn my eyes to that spot whence the accused looks on me with dignified composure; I must direct them to yon motionless stone figure that sits enthroned upon the summit of this building—upon Themis with her bandaged eyes.

"Justice, gentlemen of the jury, is not blind. She sees keenly and well. But, when she judges, she places the bandage over her eyes that she may weigh the deed only, and judge without respect of persons.

"Just as I have had to conquer myself—at least, in so far as human effort reaches—in order to be free from all the ensnaring influences of the personal, so, too, I beseech you, gentlemen of the jury, to harden yourselves against all the feelings of sympathy which you are justified in entertaining for this person. Look the matter coolly in the face. With fact only have you to deal, upon fact only to pronounce judgment. In our unrestful days this exhortation is doubly and trebly justified—yes, it is imperatively needed. The goods of this world are not equally distributed, never have been. As far back as the memory of man goes, science and experience, theory and practice, have been doing all they could to smooth down

the mighty inequalities which manifested themselves in the very beginning of civilization, and have been becoming more sharply defined in proportion as civilization has progressed. It is true that many a salutary step has been taken toward amendment in this direction by individuals and by great communities. As for any efficient result, such as could in any degree satisfy those who feel themselves to be cast into the background, oppressed, and maltreated, they have not attained it, nor are likely ever to attain it. That frightful contrast between the envied and those who envy has already in our own days borne fruit in the most abominable crimes—murder, arson, pillage, the devastation of houses and lands, and anarchy. It augurs for the future ruin, tumult, and the blackness of night. In attestation of this we need but refer to the actions of the Paris Commune, the Russian Nihilists, the Irish Fenians, and the plans of the International Socialists. No institution has been spared the attacks of these imbittered malcontents, who have not been quelled by respect for customs fortified by the usage of thousands of years. The axe has been laid to the roots of state and society, to the monarchy, to the sanctity of the Church, to the conditions which make the family in civilized countries, and secure to the sons undisturbed enjoyment of their father's earnings—in short, to all that we deem sacred and inviolable.

“Now, gentlemen of the jury, out of this fierce surging of parties there arises a mighty refuge like a wall of adamant, against which the raging waves dash impotently. No power has been able to shelter it, and to one as to the other of the combatants it is the same rescuing, sheltering haven. It is the law.

“If anything at all can moderate the irreconcilable contrasts in society it is the consciousness shared by high and low, rich and poor, that, after all, the law offers protection to the good and punishment to the wicked. The land-owner and landless have the same strong interest in maintaining the law aloft in spotless purity. And our great King Frederick has rightly said that a court which pronounces an unjust sentence is worse than a band of murderers. It would be dreadful if the reproach could be raised against us with any justice that we used two different weights and measures; if those who consider themselves as the disinherited step-children of Fate dared cry out, shrugging their shoulders: ‘The great people always have the law on their side. If a common man had done the same thing that this high-born one has done, he would certainly not

have escaped punishment !' Whether the accused is prince or proletary, should concern us not a particle.

"Your mild humanity, gentlemen of the jury, might have fatal consequences. Consider well, lay to heart this urgent warning, and now follow me on the path of matter-of-fact statement into which I shall now strike."

In a sharp, clear way and with great fluency the commonwealth's attorney reiterated the proceedings of that December night as they had already been sketched in the indictment. In a few brief, pointed words he set aside Fritz Wildicke's latest evidence, which was as adverse to the prosecution as it was amazing to everybody. He designated it as one of those, alas ! not uncommon freaks of recklessness of which villains, believing themselves exempt from punishment, become guilty, in order to strike a malicious blow at justice, their bitterest foe. He would not put to the test the moral worth of the other witnesses for the prosecution, viz., Saza and Bertha Schmider ; neither would he inquire into the motives of their action, but the essential value of their statements could not be thereby prejudiced. Did these statements stand alone and independent, then he would himself hesitate as to giving them full credence ; but they fitted perfectly into the whole as organic members, explaining what was else inexplicable.

"The accused was to go from the ball to Kroll's, in Behrenstrasse. He declined the invitation of an acquaintance to ride there with him in his carriage. He would go on foot despite the snow-storm and the cold. All of a sudden we find him in Königgrätzerstrasse, which was entirely out of his way, and there he, who had declined to ride in a gentleman's carriage, took a drosky, and could not go fast enough to Kroll's, offering the coachman six times his legitimate fee if he would only get him to Kroll's soon, where he wanted to be seen by acquaintances, you see.

"Is this comprehensible, gentlemen of the jury ? Is there not a gap here ? Can you imagine how anybody with a decided purpose, losing sight of his aim altogether, should go out in that dreadful weather for a leisurely promenade, and then all of a sudden, without any apparent reason whatever, take the most unusual means of gaining his destination in the shortest time possible ?

"Two witnesses, in the most unqualified manner, fill up this gap, supply what is missing, and explain the inexplicable. If we give credence to these witnesses—and, according to my deepest convic-

tions, in this case they deserve the fullest credence—then all becomes clear.

“The witness Schmider saw that the accused came into the palace from Königgrätzerstrasse, through the park, toward one o’clock. Soon afterward the witness Saza saw the accused issue from the park on to Königgrätzerstrasse, and there took from the witness a drosky pre-empted by himself.

“Now, gentlemen of the jury, we understand it all, and need not to feed our fancies with a fantastic, incomprehensible, and aimless promenade in a storm and darkness. Now we understand why the accused declined to accept the invitation of a friend to ride in his carriage. The accused wanted to be alone, and draw no one into his confidence. We understand why he bade defiance to the elements and went on foot. We understand fully why traces of his peculiar step are found in the park; why the snow which had accumulated upon his boots and clothes should have left marks upon the carpet and piano easily discernible to the practiced eye of the detective. Now we understand why we speedily meet him again in Königgrätzerstrasse; and why, in order to make up the time lost in this visit, he should spur on the coachman to his highest speed, that he might yet be punctual to his engagement at Kroll’s.

“Gentlemen of the jury, there rests on my mind not the slightest doubt but that the accused was at Count Iseneck’s palace that night and at that hour.

“Humanly speaking, it seems to me entirely natural that the accused should have esteemed it his bounden duty under no circumstances to betray the fact of his having paid this visit. The peculiar circumstances, the absence of the husband, the unseemliness of the hour, offered too tempting material for calumny, and left room for the worst interpretation. If any rumor of it got abroad, a deadly wound might be inflicted upon the honor of a lady in high standing.

“Well, gentlemen, upon the unclean path which the denouncer has shown us the prosecuting attorney will not, and dare not, advance. I prefer to believe good rather than evil, and, fortunately, am not obliged to bring yet greater distress upon a lady sorely enough tried without this. How often has it happened in our experience that events intertwine in the most wonderful manner, and present the appearance of a crime that has not been committed. If, as I dare to hope—as, indeed, I believe—that interview in the palace was without any ill intent, yet it was nevertheless well calculated to

unchain the tongue of slander, and a man of honor must do everything within his power to throw a veil over an action that might prove fatal over the other who had a part in it.

"The most radical means to that end was certainly the simple denial of the visit—its denial under all circumstances. And here begins the fault of the accused—a fault committed in a disinterested, self-sacrificing manner; for, gentlemen, a man of honor makes a fearful sacrifice when he gives up truth—a fault committed from the honorable motive to shield from suspicion the character of a universally respected woman.

"But, noble as was the motive, it should not have swayed him. When one is upon oath there must be no prevarication, no higgling, no compromise. To the unequivocal question put to the prince he should not have dared say aught than that—'Yes, I was in that house.' We have heard the accused, and doubt not but that he would have found the convincing accents of truth if he had come out boldly and said that, under singular circumstances, he had found occasion to be alone with the countess, and yet had no cause to shun the light of day. And our humanely disposed men of the law would have comprehended this fully. There would have been a decided unpleasantness, but nothing more. The accused, however, declared upon oath that he had not been there, and therefore we have been compelled to bring this charge against him. In raising this charge, we have conscientiously questioned ourselves as to whether we might not give the accused the benefit of supposing that there was some misunderstanding in the matter. We have been forced to renounce this surmise. The accused has studied law thoroughly, passing his legal examinations with distinction, and has such a reputation for culture that the significance of the question put to him and the significance of his own answer, given upon oath, must have been perfectly clear to him.

"Meanwhile, gentlemen of the jury, I by no means conceal from you that it revolts my soul to even speak of the degrading punishment affixed by law as the penalty for perjury in connection with the accused. That nocturnal visit to the palace in the absence of the master of the house might have been considered by that person a trespass upon his private property, and would have been an act punishable under our law by the imposition of a fine, or under some circumstances by incarceration. Since in this case the witness's statement of the truth might have entailed a prosecution on account

of this trespass, a denial would not have been considered perjury in its essential form, but in milder form been termed a misdemeanor. In this case the punishment would not have been nearly so severe, the penitentiary being exchanged for mere confinement in prison, and finally the prisoner would have had no stigma attached to his character as a gentleman.

"My motion accommodates itself to this: The accused has declared upon oath that he was not in the Iseneck palace on the night of the 21st and 22d of December, which, as I think I have proved to you, was a positively false statement; but, since the proclamation of the truth against himself might have caused him to be prosecuted for trespass upon private property, this circumstance should receive due weight in favor of the accused.

"You will now hear the counsel for the defense, whose task is a more grateful one than my own. My duty bids me make one more appeal to your consciences. Forget rank and station, character and actions—forget everything personal. Only upon the deed have you to pronounce judgment—upon nothing else; and if, with me, you share the conviction that the accused is guilty of the act laid to his charge, that through knightly consideration, in order to shield an estimable lady from the envenomed dart of calumny, he has denied before a properly qualified court an action that his manly honor would have pledged him to deny to any indifferent party; if you believe this, with me, then you will have to admit his guilt, however nearly it may touch your feelings—however it may stir your tenderest sensibilities.

"And, gentlemen of the jury, trust to my sincerity when I assert that, however keen may be the pain cost you by the fulfillment of your difficult duty should you condemn a man endowed with the qualities of the accused, this pain could not be greater and more poignant than the feeling which overpowers me when I pronounce the accused guilty!"

The commonwealth's attorney took his seat. The unaffected emotion with which he had been filled, and which had found expression in the warm tone of his full and musical voice, had communicated itself to all his hearers.

A heavy, brooding atmosphere seemed to fill the hall—an oppressive sultriness which cramped every moment, stifled every sound. For a while there reigned an anxious silence, after which ensued gradually a slight stir. A low, uneasy whispering made itself

audible and caused a certain constrained restlessness, like an expression of desire for escape from the stifling atmosphere.

"I would refer it to the counsel for the defense whether he will begin his speech immediately, or if it seems desirable to allow the court a short recess first," remarked the president, after a pause.

"I would most humbly beg, Mr. President, that the proceedings be continued without further intermission to the end."

"The counsel for the defense will please proceed, then."

Not until after the president had thus spoken did the hitherto pent-up feelings of the auditors again break forth. Everybody drew a long breath. For an instant there was a rustling that pervaded the hall, but immediately afterward it grew solemnly still, without the president finding it needful to have recourse to the tapping of his bell. Again there was mirrored upon every face the suspense with which all looked forward to the counter-arguments of the defender, and hearkened with breathless interest, when he began :

"GENTLEMEN OF THE JURY: It is something out of the common way that the first words of a defendant should be nothing else than words of sincerest gratitude which he must address to the prosecuting attorney. Rightly has that gentleman pronounced my task the more grateful one in the melancholy affair that occupies our attention, for I can, indeed, imagine nothing finer and more exalted than to be permitted to defend superiority and purity against the attempt made by wickedness to degrade and defile it. Yes, my task is the more delightful one, and, with a heart overflowing from gratitude, I add that my opponent has essentially lightened it. That in every particular the striking picture which he has drawn of his Highness the Prince von Engernheim, the conviction cropping out of every one of his sentences that an honorable man such as this, a nobleman in the highest sense of the word, is in general incapable of committing an action that is characterized by law as one of the gravest of crimes—in a word, everything essential that the gentleman opposed has been impelled by duty to say of the accused—I adopt, without altering a word of it for the defense.

"In presence of this victorious power of the prince's personality the prosecuting attorney has felt compelled, gentlemen of the jury, to rid you by force, as it were, of the impression that such a character must produce upon every one. Here, too, I entirely agree with that honorable gentleman. It would be beneath me to bring out the effect that I might so easily do by drawing a contrast be-

tween the character of the accused and his accuser. No, gentlemen, that genius which profits by the breathing space allowed between the payment of penalty for one crime and that for another that must come soon, to destroy, if possible, the reputation and repose of the innocent, deserves not the honor of being brought into contrast with a man of honor. For us there is no relationship with such people. We treat them as Prince von Engernheim treated Saza—that is to say, we have nothing to do with them; we simply turn our backs upon them in contempt.

“I have no need to avail myself of the effect produced by the personal, which the gentleman dreaded so much, and instead of shunning the strictest scrutiny of the facts have to court such scrutiny.

“But, how about the facts? The only charges are those which we have heard from the confederated pair, Saza and Schmider? It is only what these witnesses, this publisher of ‘The Advocate’ and his respectable housekeeper, have stated—it is only this that the prince has denied. Positively, the whole accusation rests upon the denunciation and evidence of this couple. Do these witnesses fall away, then the whole rotten edifice tumbles to the ground.

“How, then, about these witnesses?

“Gentlemen of the jury, let me implore you, after you have retired to your consulting-room, to examine the letters which Schmider addressed to the prince under the dictation of Saza. Read them, too, in conjunction with the articles which this same Saza published about his Highness in his notorious sheet. The former are the confidential preface to the latter. One comprehends the articles only after one has become acquainted with the letters. And what does the whole thing signify? An attempted extortion, which has happily miscarried, but an extortion of the vilest sort, pursued with wicked vengeance on account of its miscarriage. Such is the truth which I now utter, without weighing my words.

“Well, gentlemen of the jury, extortion thrives only under the sunshine of lying. And nothing shall hold me back from giving expression on the spot to my conviction that these people—who now take their places in this hall as witnesses, but who soon, I hope, will occupy their proper place before the bar of justice, on the criminal’s bench, as extortioners—have lied!”

Here the president interposed, saying: “I must call the gentleman’s attention to the fact that my office pledges me to protect

witnesses. Permit me to indulge the hope that I may not again find it necessary to interrupt, by censure, a defense that I would in no way obstruct."

Quintus bowed to the president.

"I submit to the reproof with due reverence, and since I must admit that in a case like the present it is an almost impossible task for the president to shield such witnesses from insult, surely I shall do what in me lies not to make the president's difficult task yet more difficult.

"This, then, is the state of the case with regard to the article-writer and his letter-writer. They alone saw his Highness enter and leave the park.

"But in the park, notoriously, the tracks of only one man were found in the snow.

"Now Fritz Wildicke comes forward and declares: 'I was in the park; I left those tracks.'

"It seems to me that the prosecuting attorney passed somewhat too lightly over this important evidence, casting at it only a depreciatory glance. Of course, I am far from referring to Wildicke as an ideal witness; but this Wildicke was summoned, as well as Saza, by the commonwealth's attorney. *Arcades ambo!* which Byron, be it remarked in passing, translates somewhat freely by: 'Alike common souls.' And, without any unpleasant reference whatever to a witness, I may say that in general house-breakers and extortioners—I do not know in general to which class I would give precedence, but in regard to credibility, in particular, unconditionally to the house-breaker, for he needs no other tool than a chisel and pick-lock; but, for the extortioner, his indispensable tool is lying, in conjunction with slander and threats.

"I candidly confess to you that some impression was made upon me by that remark of Wildicke: 'As an accused man I may lie, but as a witness I must tell the truth'—disputable as is this thesis, and likewise of doubtful morality. Why am I to give less credit to Wildicke than to Saza?

"And, gentlemen of the jury, keep your eye well on this one thing—it was those very tracks in the snow that led the detectives to convict Wildicke as having to do with the robbery. They must, therefore, have been such as Wildicke could have made. Now, Wildicke says: 'Yes, those were my footsteps.' Why, then, are we not to believe him?

"If we do believe him, however, what becomes of the Schmider's observations, who, in a pitch-dark night, at the distance of fifty paces, under the trees of a park not lighted at all, could clearly recognize a man by his gait, the same whom another could not recognize, using his best endeavors, only twenty steps off, in a street illuminated by gas-light? What of the observations of Saza, who once saw somebody come out of a park, and four years afterward wants to assert positively that unknown person took the drosky away from him that time, and having learned that Prince von Engernheim rode in that drosky, therefore it was the prince who on the night of the 21st-22d of December came out of Count Iseneck's park. What, in view of these facts, becomes of the whole accusation?

"No, gentlemen of the jury, the prince was not in the park, and he spoke the truth in court.

"But I go further—much further. I say that on no account should the prince have answered differently than he did in reply to the question put to him; and, even supposing that he had committed perjury according to the letter of the law, even then it would be your privilege—nay, your duty—to clear him. For, under those peculiar circumstances, he would not have committed the crime which our law designates as perjury.

"Let us suppose the case that the prince really was in the Iseneck palace that night. Let us follow—although with conceivable reluctance—the indication of a Saza into the domain of improbable hypothesis. And let us further suppose that the prince is confronted by the question, the answering of which is perfectly indifferent to the lawyers, because wholly irrelevant to the case then before them. Is the prince obliged, then, to answer this wholly irrelevant, impertinent question—of no value at all in the eye of the law—in such a manner that thereby the reputation of a lady and the honor of a whole family be destroyed. Would the law require this of him? It would be a pitiable law, indeed, if it did.

"And the reputation of that unfortunate lady would have been irretrievably lost—irretrievably. How many, or rather how few, under these circumstances, would coincide in the delicate interpretation put upon them by our respected commonwealth's attorney, whose knowledge of the character of both justifies him in putting an innocent interpretation upon an interview taking place between them, no matter how strange the appearance might be. The ma-

jority—nay, the generality—would judge less kindly; the great pack of hounds would tear to pieces the victim that calumny had exposed to their fury; and all this because a person on oath must speak nothing but the whole truth in reply to an accidental, unimportant question, irrelevant to the matter in hand.

“Gentlemen of the jury, we are under the control of law, not under an irresponsible despotism. The living law rules, not its dead letter.

“The law is indubitably the highest expression of human perception, human wisdom. No one is more ready to admit this than we ministers of the law; but, as a human institution, imperfection attaches even to law. There have been bad laws—we still have bad laws. Horror overtakes us if we picture to ourselves what our ancestors deemed right, although they were just as wise as ourselves, being pioneers in science, making grand inventions and discoveries, the creators of the most glorious masterpieces of art and poesy, and in whom also a sense of the true, noble, beautiful, and moral was equally well developed. The pillory, the scourge, administered in the public market square, the rack, branding, the trial of witches—how long has it been since we were rid of these legalized cruelties? Will not a later generation condemn, just as emphatically, some of our legalized practices, as we do the barbarities of our forefathers?

“We know, only too well, that our code of law is not yet perfect, that new times involve new relations, and new relations give birth to new necessities, and therefore the legal machine never stands still, and labors incessantly for the perpetual improvement of legal institutions.

“Among these improvements, as one of the most glorious and beneficent, is to be designated the introduction of trial by jury, freeing the administration of justice from the rigid barriers of a prejudiced scholarliness, that can have only an office, but no opinion, admitting to a partnership in this administration of justice the plain, unlettered citizen, who, on the contrary, is to have no office but only an opinion.

“Where the law presents itself to the human sensibility and conscience as unjust, because, in its straitness and generality, it can not possibly fit all imaginable cases, there, gentlemen of the jury, you come in with your sound judgment and perception of the truth, and afford the scholarly lawyer the possibility of demonstrating that

which is legally right will equally approve itself as right to the universal conscience.

“Law must be written ; and yet ‘the letter killeth, but the spirit maketh alive.’ And your duty is exactly this—to animate the letter by the spirit within. You need not be learned in the law—you even ought not to be. As men of right feeling and common sense you have only to know right from wrong, true from false, moral from what is immoral—nothing more. You have only to consider the matter in all its aspects ; examine into it, and decide upon it according as your conscience shall dictate. No man has the right to ask after your reasons ; they desire of you no other answer than yes or no.

“Now, gentlemen of the jury, if a witness makes an essentially false statement before a court of justice he commits perjury—a degrading crime. Therefore, the law which threatens false witness before a court of justice with the severest of penalties is an inevitable necessity. Justice would be undermined and shaken to her very foundations if power were not given to its ministers to enforce trustworthy evidence by the strongest of means. Very justly also circumstances deemed mitigating in other cases would not be deemed admissible where perjury is in question. A few cases which lessen the culpability of perjury are defined by law.

“But outside of these defined cases are there not others imaginable, which the law, in its strict generality, has not foreseen nor been able to guard against, and which, nevertheless, we all feel in our souls to be no fault, much less crime, that draws after it a degrading punishment ?

“If a question is put to me as a witness, the answering of which can in no way affect the case in hand—an accidental question, say—must I answer that question under all circumstances, even though I thereby commit a breach of trust against a friend, or lay bare a family secret that plunges the innocent into despair—if I break a vow, if I make public that which I swore upon my honor to conceal when a dying man required that pledge of me in his last hour of agony ?

“Must I do this ? Must I, in order to satisfy a legal requirement, be guilty of an act whose fatal consequences might be out of all proportion to any value that my evidence might have had—must I do this ? Am I a perjurer if I faithfully ward off misery from that family—prove myself worthy of the trust reposed in me

by the dying, and sacredly guard the secret which is not my own? Does the law will that I be thrust out of the society of honorable people because I do what honor and duty require of me?

"No, gentlemen of the jury, that is not the will of the law. I can here put in the plea of having used my weapon in self-defense, which is an all-powerful one whenever established. It is my duty, by every means available, to keep my secret, to hold safely property intrusted to me, and to ward off every unjustifiable attack. This moral weapon of defense is just as rational as the corporeal one. Could such a secret be less valuable than costly jewels—than gold and the worth of gold? Is he who breaks into the stronghold of my confidence, robbing and pilfering me of my secret, at all better than the robber who works with his chisel? Does the extortioner, then, stand higher than the robber and murderer?

"No. I may cut down, in justifiable protection of my life and property, the robber or murderer. And should I, with my hands tied, yield to the extortioner the hidden treasures of my inmost being? And should the law aid and abet such a wretch? Moreover, should there be any obligation upon me to answer any question that such a fellow chose to put to me, under penalty of becoming a perjurer?

"I may not strike down the extortioner, but I may use every available means to defend myself against him. And just as little as I commit a murder if I shoot down a robber who is trying to cut my throat, just so little do I become guilty of perjury if, driven to extremity by an extortioner, I utter untruth, in order to save myself from breaking faith with a third party. At such a time falsehood becomes a weapon of self-defense. Among all criminals, the extortioner stands on the lowest step of infamy. In the other gravest crimes we find ingredients that, in some sense, are extenuating, such as passion and high spirit. But these miserable wretches, who filch from us trickishly a goading, unwilling secret—who, slowly and unrelentingly, sap our vital blood by constantly threatening to bring this secret into a horrid publicity, to rob us of our honor, to attach a stigma to our names, and undermine our position—who fatten themselves by robbing our souls of tranquillity and refreshing sleep, are not these cowardly and passionless wretches the most abominable of all robbers and murderers?

"And from these unscrupulous knaves you have to protect us and yourselves. Yes, yourselves! For not one of you is secure

against the treacherous assault of this band. To-day 'The Advocate' entertains its readers at the expense of his Highness the Prince von Engernheim; to-morrow, perhaps, in a piquant article he will open his game with one of you. Who can say?

"But turn with nausea and abhorrence from the mud and filth stirred up by this Saza, and after the cruel trial imposed upon you by his revenge-seeking purpose, grant yourselves the high satisfaction, the moral relief of directing your glance to the gentleman who has done me the honor to select me for his advocate! Do not retire to your consulting-room with the depressing idea that you are compelled to punish where the conviction of your conscience bids you stay your hand; retire rather to consult with the animating consciousness that it is your lofty privilege to exalt the unwritten, moral law above the limitations of written law, which only for the learned lawyer has weight when it comes in conflict with what our inward consciousness tells us is right. As perfectly independent men, whose freedom knows no limit but that prescribed by the dictates of your own consciences, thus will you pronounce sentence. In joyful expectation I look forward to your verdict. You will do justice to the accused, gentlemen of the jury. You will clear him."

Amid a general outburst of deep feeling councillor Quintus seated himself. The people were mightily stirred. A low murmur was audible, no distinct sound. An involuntary straightening up, no striking gestures. There were evidences that a profound impression had been made.

The president cast an inquiring glance at the commonwealth's attorney. He answered the silent question in the negative by a bow likewise given in silence.

"Has the accused anything more to say in his own defense?" asked the president of the prince.

Ulrich drew himself up, shook his head silently, and resumed his seat.

The president now rehearsed aloud the two questions which the court had decreed to lay before the jury for them to respond to, and with the statement of which the lawyers both for the prosecution and the defense declared themselves satisfied.

"Is the accused guilty of having perjured himself in that he declared, upon oath, before the court of justice which sat in Berlin on April 15, 1880, that he had neither been in the park attached to the Iseneck palace nor in the Iseneck palace itself on the night of the

21st and 22d of December? And in case of that question being answered in the affirmative, could the statement of the truth have drawn down upon the accused a prosecution for unlawful trespass upon private property?"

After being instructed by the president, the jury retired to their consulting-room. It was almost eight o'clock when the gentlemen dispersed, the lawyers to their room and Councilor Quintus to the attorney's room, whither he invited the prince to follow him, since he ought not to be in the court-room at the proclamation of the jury's verdict. Not one of the audience budged from his place. Now, animated discussions soon took place, opinions being exchanged as to the relative merits of the speeches which they had just been listening to, and all discussed warmly the question, Was the prince in the Iseneck palace, or was he not? Opinions differed greatly upon this point. But perfect unanimity prevailed regarding one thing, viz., that in the worst case the prince could not have acted differently from what he had done. The indignation against Saza, which had been fanned by Quintus's words into a lively flame, was indescribable.

In the attorney's room, Ulrich grasped the hand of his defender and pressed it strongly.

"I thank you," said he—nothing more. He was deeply moved. But, perhaps, though less moved than Quintus himself, who now could not utter a single word. He silently nodded, and filling a glass with water emptied it at a draught.

Hardly ten minutes had elapsed before the nuncio came to report that the jury had just rung.

"You will be called, your Highness," said Quintus, moving off quickly. The prince was left alone.

The jury, lawyers, commonwealth's attorney, and Quintus took their places.

There was something oppressive in the stillness that ensued.

The president called upon the foreman to make known the decision of the jury.

The foreman arose, took out a paper and read clearly and distinctly:

"Upon my honor and conscience, I certify this to be the judgment of the jury. First question:

"Is the accused guilty of having perjured himself, in that he declared upon oath before the court of justice which sat in Berlin on

April 15, 1880, that he had neither been in the park attached to the Iseneck palace, nor in the Iseneck palace itself, on the night of December the twenty-first—twenty-second? No!"

At this "no" broke forth an uncontrollable burst of enthusiasm that nothing could restrain. It was like the cry that tells of birth into life. The president tapped his bell. Forthwith there was quiet again. But radiant joy was sparkling in every eye.

"Let the accused come in," was the president's mandate to the nuncio.

Prince Ulrich again appeared in the hall, profound silence reigning. There he stood, manly and distinguished-looking, motionless, not a fiber of his frame quivering.

The clerk of the court read aloud the verdict of the jury. At the decisive word "no," that again found its subdued echo in the ranks of the spectators, he lowered his eyelids for one second. But he neither spoke nor stirred.

The president, in the name of the emperor and king, proclaimed the verdict of the jury that cleared the accused of penalty and cost. The prince bowed low to the gentlemen of the court and jury.

The proceedings had been brought to a close.

Tumultuously the people poured out upon the corridors. There was a concourse at the court-room door waiting to offer the prince congratulations. The police had difficulty in thwarting the friendly purpose of the multitude, and did not succeed for some time in clearing the corridors and stairways. Upon the square outside the policemen had just as much trouble in dispersing groups of the inquisitive and in persuading them to go on.

The president had to provide an especial escort for Saza and Schmider, whose personal safety seemed to be seriously threatened, in view of the fearful excitement of the crowd. Under a safe convoy they were conducted through a small side door to a close drosky that had been ordered up at the president's bidding; and in this the wretches rolled home, amid execrations on every hand.

Those who wished to offer a sympathetic ovation to the prince miscalculated. The prince stayed some time longer in the hall of session, in company with Quintus. Herr von Dürenborn was about to pass them by with a mere bow. Ulrich, however, obstructed his way and held out his hand to him.

"You did your duty, old fellow! I hope all will be between us as of old."

The commonwealth's attorney pressed Ulrich's hand hard.

"I thank you, with all my heart! Preserve your friendship for me."

Dürenborn's voice trembled. He was powerfully affected. He clinched his teeth, bowed to both gentlemen, and left the hall.

"How late is it?" asked Ulrich of Quintus.

"Just half-past nine."

"Oh, sorrow! then I can not telegraph to-night. Kypstein has only day-delivery. My parents-in-law will be very uneasy."

"And the princess, your wife?"

"My wife, happily, has no suspicion of the whole affair. It is the only thing that comforts me. But, at all events, I shall give in the dispatch to-night, so that my parents' anxiety may be relieved at the first possible moment to-morrow morning. And now, dear councilor, appetite begins to assert itself. Gratify me by taking supper with me, and let us spend the evening together."

"It will give me great pleasure. By the way, I believe we may now go on our way undisturbed. The crowd seems to have dispersed. Let me ask you to exercise patience for one minute. I want to lay aside my robe and order up a drosky. It will be before the little side door. Thence we can escape unnoticed."

The two took the same road which Saza and Schmider had followed before them in fear and trembling.

Upon the square a joyfully excited multitude were still moving to and fro, but no one perceived the prince and his lawyer as they drove past in the closed drosky.

CHAPTER XI.

ULRICH SETTLES HIS ACCOUNT.

PRINCE ULRICH VON ENGERNHEIM and Councilor of Justice Felix Quintus sat in a cosy little apartment of the Hotel Royal. They had eaten and drank, and with a cup of coffee were now smoking their cigars, when the waiter handed a note to the prince, saying that the bearer was waiting for an answer.

"Excuse me," said the prince, while he opened the note.

"Certainly."

Ulrich read the note—very attentively, as it seemed. Then he stepped to the little writing-table, wrote a few lines, sealed them in an envelope, and handed the missive to the servant for the waiting messenger.

After this interruption the gentlemen resumed the broken thread of their conversation. It was near eleven o'clock when Quintus took his leave of the prince.

When the latter found himself alone he drew from his pocket the note which he had received, and read it over again. It ran thus :

“BERLIN, *November 12, 1883.*

“MOST NOBLE PRINCE: In company with my friend the minister of justice, and in his private box, I was present at to-day's proceedings. The statement of an accused person in court may be different from the one which the same person, in so far as he is a man of honor, would make to another man of honor. To be cleared in court exempts the person only from the legal charge, but it does not release him from personal responsibility for his actions, if through those actions a third person feels his honor impugned.

“I therefore put this question :

“Can your Highness give me your word of honor that you were not at my house that night in December ?

“In that case I should like to have the honor of a call from your Highness at my house to-morrow morning.

“In the other case, your Highness may expect to be called upon to-morrow afternoon by two friends properly empowered to act for me, at any hour that your Highness may designate.

“An immediate answer is expected.

“Your Highness's most obedient servant,

“COUNT ALBERT VON ISENECK.”

The prince had thus replied :

“SIR COUNT : I shall not go out to-morrow morning, and shall expect the honor of the promised visit from nine o'clock on.

“Your most obedient,

“PRINCE ULRICH VON ENGERNHEIM.”

Ulrich wrote two more brief notes to a couple of friends, viz., Count Pracks of the Embassy and the Councilor of Legation Von Berwitz, ordering his servant to forward them to their proper ad-

dresses early in the morning, certainly before eight o'clock. After this he opened the window, let the cold night air blow in, and looked thoughtfully down upon the linden trees. He stretched himself. He felt as though a burdensome weight were attached to his limbs. A great strain had been put upon him that day, and ineffable weariness laid hold of his whole being.

With slow and heavy steps he went into his sleeping-room. On the table lay a pile of visiting cards, by means of which sympathizing friends had made haste to send their congratulations, leaving them with the *portier*. He felt so thoroughly worn out that he did not even stop to read their names. He undressed himself, and hardly had he extinguished the light before he was fast asleep. He slept without waking until the next morning.

He had risen from the breakfast-table and the little mantel-clock had just struck nine when were announced Baron von Heddersdorf, Ambassador Plenipotentiary to the Confederate Council, and Count Lebrecht von Boost, lieutenant-colonel of a regiment of cavalry. He directed the gentlemen to be ushered into the parlor, whither he preceded them.

The gentlemen paid their respects in the politest manner. They all were acquainted, so that no introduction was needed.

Prince Ulrich requested the gentlemen to be seated, and while he took his own seat, he asked:

"May I ask the gentlemen to what I owe the honor of their visit?"

Count Boost, the elder of the two, turned to the prince with the following words:

"Our friend Count Albert von Iseneck feels his honor touched by certain actions of your Highness, referred to in the public proceedings at court, and has commissioned us to demand satisfaction of your Highness. Is your Highness inclined to accept the challenge?"

"Certainly, count!" answered Ulrich. "I accept Count von Iseneck's challenge. As soon as possible, by eleven o'clock, I trust, I shall have the honor of communicating to you the names of two of my friends, who will undertake to represent my interests. Will you be so good as to indicate the hour and place in which my friends can enter into negotiation with you?"

"We shall have the honor of expecting the gentlemen representing you at eleven o'clock, at my residence," replied the count.

The two deputies got up, and the prince also stood up, conducted the gentlemen to the door, and after exchanging low bows they parted.

A half-hour later came Berwitz, and immediately afterward Count Pracks.

The directions which the prince gave to his friends detained them only a short while. Under existing circumstances, there could, of course, be no talk of any attempt at a reconciliation, and, to save time, this might as well be looked upon as having failed, in advance; he was ready to acquiesce unquestioningly in whatever conditions his opponent's seconds might impose, as regards the arrangement of the duel, and besought his friends to make no difficulty whatever on that head, and in general to avoid everything that might protract the affair. They would oblige him very much by making all possible dispatch. He would be best pleased if the duel could be arranged to take place the next morning at day-break.

Armed with these instructions, Count Pracks and Herr von Berwitz arrived at Count von Heddersdorf's house about eleven o'clock. By that gentleman and Count Boost they were already waited for.

After the four gentlemen were seated, Count Boost took the initiative as the senior second of Count von Iseneck.

"You gentlemen have undoubtedly been made aware by his Highness the Prince von Engernheim of the object of our interview, and I therefore need not refer to its painful occasion." He made a short pause. "I believe I may interpret your silence as assent," he continued. "Count Iseneck, who has honored us by devolving the representation of his interests upon us, insists upon demanding satisfaction of his Highness the Prince von Engernheim for the injury done him, by recourse to arms, and declines unconditionally any other attempt at settlement."

"Prince von Engernheim," declared Count Pracks, in his turn, "has foreseen this state of the case, and, on his side, can suggest no other mode of accommodation. We may as well therefore set it down that the attempt to reconcile our principals has failed."

"Very well," replied Count Boost. "After this it remains for us to adjust the exact details of the duel. The choice of weapons belongs to our principal as the injured party. You gentlemen admit that, do you not? Count Iseneck has determined that the

duel shall be fought with pistols. Are you gentlemen agreed to this, as well? As for the rest, the following terms will suit: fifteen paces distance, with firm stand and free shot, and balls to be exchanged three times."

"Fifteen paces, free shot, and the exchange of three balls?" repeated Count Pracks. "Do not these terms seem to you gentlemen extremely hard?"

"Our principal believes that he must insist upon their acceptance," returned Count Boost. "We, too, drew his attention to the extreme severity of these measures and earnestly exhorted him to moderate them, but in vain. Our principal insists positively upon the conditions which we have just imparted to you being carried into effect."

"Then, nothing is left for us but to accede to them," answered Count Pracks. "You agree, also, in the wish to arrange this affair in the shortest possible space of time?"

"Perfectly," assented Count Boost. "The question of settling upon a suitable place of meeting and the choice of precise weapons need hardly detain us; and I therefore venture the proposal that the duel take place to-morrow morning, directly after daybreak, therefore a quarter after seven o'clock."

"Early to-morrow morning, a quarter after seven o'clock; perfectly agreed," remarked the ambassador.

"Baron von Heddersdorf had a proposition to make as regards the ground and weapons," remarked Count Boost.

"A cousin of mine," said Baron von Heddersdorf, "owns an estate about two miles to the west, back of the Charlottenburg palace garden. Britzow is surrounded by a large park that lies off the high-road, and would be perfectly adapted to our purpose. I could make perfectly free on the premises, and be in a condition to take the requisite precautions for avoiding any unpleasant interruption."

"You mean Britzow, about two and a quarter miles from here, to the rear of the Charlottenburg palace garden?" repeated the ambassador. "Do the coachmen know the way?"

"Every Berlin coachman knows Britzow."

"And at what hour must we set out from the Hotel Royal, in order to be at the spot punctually? We would take my carriage."

"With your own horses?—about thirty-five—at most forty minutes, your Excellency," answered the baron.

"Then we would have to set out between half-past six and a quarter to seven o'clock?"

"Yes."

"That is settled. And the weapons?"

"If you will allow me," said Heddersdorf, "I'll show you mine." He took from a side table a mahogany case plated with metal, opened it, and remarked, as he handed a pistol to one of the seconds: "Its workmanship is superb. A short time since I fired off two shots from each pistol, and convinced myself that they are in the best condition. Of course, they are as unfamiliar to Count von Iseneck as to Prince von Engernheim. Meanwhile, if the gentlemen prefer any other arrangement we are ready to defer—"

"Oh, no," interposed Pracks, who had very attentively scrutinized the weapon. "These pistols seem to be just what is wanted."

"Very fine workmanship, indeed," exclaimed Berwitz, "and just what is wanted! I, too, have no objection whatever to make to them; as for that matter, I have a very good pair of pistols myself—hardly inferior to these—which are entirely at their disposal. I'll bring them with me to-morrow morning. We could let it be decided by lot, to-morrow morning on the ground, which weapons shall be used."

"We are perfectly agreed to that," answered the lieutenant-colonel. "You gentlemen will, of course, be provided with medical aid. We, likewise, will have a surgeon along. It seems, then, that we are in accord as regards every particular. There is only the protocol to be made out. Messrs. von Berwitz and Baron von Heddersdorf will have the goodness to undertake that task, will they not?"

Those two gentlemen advanced to the large desk and prepared that paper in common, while the ambassador and lieutenant-colonel drew somewhat aside and conversed upon indifferent matters in a subdued tone.

The protocol was then read aloud by Baron von Berwitz and subscribed to by the four seconds.

About half after one o'clock Count Albert von Iseneck and Prince Ulrich von Engernheim were duly informed of all that had been done.

The preceding day, viz., November 12, the day of the trial, had been a trying season of unrest and excitement for the prince's

family at Kypstein. It is true Ulrich had kept the promise he gave Alix when he parted with her, and sent her a dispatch in the morning that comforted her as to his well-being and cheerfulness, as also the likelihood that he would soon be through with his business.

Prince Engelbert and Princess Carola, meanwhile, did not seem to be heartily sympathetic at the reception of this news. They were markedly preoccupied and restless—often whispered to one another, and suddenly broke off their confidences whenever Alix came near them, exchanging glances in a singular way—in short, they could neither master nor conceal the unwonted excitement that had taken possession of them; and this excitement was of anything but a joyful nature.

“What in the world is the matter with you?” asked Alix, at last, who had been for a long time struck by the demeanor of her parents.

“Nothing, my child,” answered Prince Eyckhof. “What puts such an idea into your head? Not the least thing.”

“You can not deceive, papa; no more can mamma. You are hiding something from me—something dreadful! I am anxious. Tell me what is going on, else I’ll imagine something worse—does it concern Ulrich?”

“How can you think of such a thing? You look like a ghost. It is nothing—nothing whatever.”

Alix was silent, but by no means comforted.

The farther the hour hands progressed in their circuit around the face of the clock the more striking became the agitation of her parents. When Alix was passing through the corridor she saw her mother speak to a servant and then go into the parlor. Alix called the servant to come to her.

“What was that the princess was asking you?”

“Her Highness wanted to know how late the telegraph office at Kypstein kept open, and when the last dispatches would be delivered.”

Alix went into the parlor. It was about eight o’clock. Prince Engelbert and Princess Carola were standing at the fireplace, talking together in an undertone. When they caught sight of Alix they hushed.

“I want to know what is going on,” she said, with great decision. “I am no longer a child. I know that you are concealing something from me. You are expecting tidings—a dispatch—from

Berlin—from Ulrich? Oh, do speak! You make me lil! Has anything happened to Ulrich? Answer, if you love me. The most dreadful news would torture me less than this unendurable suspense."

Her parents looked at each other questioningly.

"You craze me with your silence. You can not imagine what thoughts I have, else you would speak."

Her eyes had filled with tears, and she ran up and down the room like a person in despair. Finally she went up to her mother, who had dropped into a small chair by the hearth, fell on her knees before her, seized her hands, and sobbed:

"Mamma, you have always been so good to me. You do not know how you distress me. Have pity on me!"

Carola stroked her child's soft hair, and, looking up at her husband, she said: "I have not the heart to torture the child so."

Prince Engelbert nodded assent.

"Calm yourself, Alix; we'll tell you everything. It is nothing—I swear nothing has happened—nothing that could pain you; only a great unpleasantness, that is all. They have brought suit against Ulrich for an action done a long time ago. The case was tried to-day, and, of course, can only be decided in Ulrich's favor. We are expecting the dispatch now—that is all."

Alix looked her mother firmly in the eye.

"Is that really all?" asked she, with sharp intonation, while she dried her tears.

"All," repeated Carola, in a quiet and soothing tone.

"Well, why did you not tell me this directly?" asked she, smiling, while she rose to her feet.

"Ulrich had bidden us spare you the useless excitement."

"And what is the suit about? About some money matter?"

"No," now interposed the old prince. "About a question of honor. A rascal of a newspaper writer has made an attack upon Ulrich's honor, and the matter is to be decided to-day."

"Ah!" replied Alix, reflectively.

The three were silent for a long while. Alix stared into the open fire. A thousand thoughts were revolving in her brain. Suddenly she made an energetic movement.

"This evening, alas! it is too late," cried she. "I shall set off to-morrow morning by the early train, then I shall get to Berlin the same hour next morning. My resolution is unalterable. It is not

worth while to waste words trying to dissuade me. I know what I mean to do. I'll certainly make the journey. If one of you will go with me so much the better. If not, I'll go alone."

All attempts to overcome this resolution failed before the unbending will of the young wife. She dismissed the objection that perhaps Ulrich might set out before her, and that they would cross each other on the road, by reference to the dispatch received from Ulrich that morning, in which he had announced that, at the earliest, he would not be able to leave Berlin before the evening of the 13th ultimo. A dispatch, then, would certainly reach him in the morning, and then he would surely await her arrival on the morning of the 14th.

All entreaties on the part of her parents were vain. Alix had her things packed at once, and gave orders that the carriage should be at the door promptly next morning at seven o'clock.

In the evening, at tea, it was agreed that Princess Carola should stay at Kypstein to superintend the care of the child, while Prince Engelbert should attend his daughter to Berlin. By Alix's desire, the dispatch—which was to be sent off at the earliest possible moment next morning—was so worded that Ulrich would only be made aware of his father-in-law's intended coming.

"He would perhaps be a little vexed with me, on account of my self-willed disobedience," said Alix. "But he will forgive me as soon as he lays eyes on me. And when I explain everything to him he will even agree that I was right."

The dispatch ran simply thus :

"Reach Berlin early in the morning, about eight o'clock. Please wait for me without fail. All well here. ENGELBERT."

Next day, in the gray of the morning, Alix and Prince Engelbert forsook the old castle of Kypstein. They had arranged that a telegraphic dispatch should meet them in the afternoon at a half-way station. And when they got there it was in place. It ran :

"The longed-for tidings just received. Ulrich telegraphs : 'You may congratulate me !' Nothing more. I am delighted. Gunther satisfied. CAROLA."

Alix was overjoyed.

"Now we shall be the first to rejoice with him. Now do you

think your child as unreasonable as you maintained she was yesterday? And was I not right?"

"Of course. You are always right," answered the prince, smiling, and kissing his charming daughter on her brow.

Once more joy beamed from those wondrous eyes of hers, and the youthful matron was more graceful and fascinating than ever before. With deep satisfaction the glance of the father rested upon his happy child, while forests and fields whizzed past them and the puffing iron monster dashed onward upon its north-bound course.

CHAPTER XII.

THE END.

It was still dark. The lanterns were yet burning. A fine, hardly perceptible rain fell from the black sky; properly, it was rather a dense, damp fog. It was tolerably cold and very uncomfortable.

Yesterday, in the afternoon, Ulrich had attended to everything that he wanted settled.

He stood at the window fully dressed, with his hat on, looking out upon the dark, empty street. On the damp pavement quivered the long drawn out reflection of the gas jets. Half after six had just struck.

Then a large landau, drawn by two powerful bay horses, coming from the Linden, turned into Wilhelmstrasse, and stopped before the door of the hotel. The servant sprang from the box.

Ulrich opened his window and called to the dark form that emerged from the carriage: "Don't trouble yourself. I'm coming."

His man-servant helped him on with his long, heavy overcoat.

"Put out the lamp and follow me," said Ulrich.

The gentlemen greeted each other below with a warm pressure of the hand.

"I should be pleased if I could take my servant with me," remarked Ulrich to Count Pracks.

"Why, of course, you can."

"You can return home," was the ambassador's order to his own valet.

Ulrich's man closed the carriage-door behind the gentlemen and climbed up upon the box. The carriage rolled away.

Ulrich and Pracks sat on the back seat, opposite to them Berwitz and Dr. Zwirner, an old comrade and university friend of the prince, who was also Count Pracks's family physician. On the way few words were spoken.

At the Charlottenburg turn-out they came up with another landau, that was likewise driving up the broad highway at a rapid rate.

Count Pracks let down the window. By the gray horses and light-brown livery he recognized the equipage as Count Iseneck's.

"Do not take the lead," he called to his coachman. "Follow yonder carriage. Our destination is the same."

The two carriages turned into a vast park. The gate stood open. Following a rather narrow, sandy road, softened by the rain, which wound through the thicket, in a few minutes they reached a clearing, where stood a cottage, probably occupied by the gardener and his family. From a window on the ground floor a feeble light issued, blending strangely with the gray dawn of coming day.

The foremost carriage halted. Count Iseneck, Count Boost, Baron von Heddersdorf, and Privy Councilor Dr. Lohausen alighted and retired to a little distance. As soon as they saw that the prince, with his attendants, had likewise left their carriage, under Heddersdorf's guidance, they went up a little side path.

Ulrich and his friends followed them at a distance of about fifty paces.

Hardly five hundred steps removed from the cottage was an open square, which the owner of the park had specially arranged for lawn tennis. It was surrounded on all sides by the now leafless trees of the park.

"We are at the place," said Baron von Heddersdorf, pausing, as did also the gentlemen with him.

When Ulrich and his friends came up all the gentlemen silently took off their hats.

Day meanwhile had dawned dark and lowering. Count Boost looked at his watch. It still lacked a few minutes of the appointed time.

Count Albrecht von Iseneck and Prince Ulrich kept apart. The two surgeons once more exchanged greetings and shook hands. They spoke together in low tones.

The four seconds came together and drew lots. It was decided

by lot that Baron von Heddersdorf should direct the combat, while there was to be associated with him, for any assistance needed, Count Pracks, as the oldest second on the opposite side.

The spot was well suited for their purpose. In the middle were the places to stand, which were equally situated as regards light and surroundings, and fifteen paces apart.

The pistols that Von Berwitz had brought with him, after attentive inspection, were found perfectly suitable. And yet the lot decided for those brought by Von Heddersdorf. Again, which particular pistol of the pair was to fall to each duelist was determined by lot.

The loading was managed with scrupulous care; first, the pistol of the count by Baron von Heddersdorf, then that of the prince by Count Pracks. The ramrod was once more introduced into the barrel of each pistol, in order to establish the perfect equality of the loads.

Hereupon the antagonists were summoned.

"I request the gentlemen to take off their overcoats," was the behest made by Baron von Heddersdorf. "They can keep on their coats. But if the gentlemen have any hard articles in their pockets, they will be so good as to lay them aside."

Count Albrecht and Prince Ulrich had thrown off their heavy overcoats at the first words. Now they handed to their seconds their watches, *porte-monnaies*, letter-cases, and keys. Ulrich also drew forth from his left breast-pocket a letter, which he offered to give up.

"Your Highness may keep the letter. There is only in question objects that might offer resistance."

The prince again pocketed his letter, and buttoned up his coat.

"Count Pracks, will you be so good as to read aloud the protocol with the terms of combat?"

Fine rain was still drizzling steadily down. The moisture was dimming the characters upon the page that the ambassador was now unfolding. He read clearly, and with a steady voice:

"The undersigned met yesterday, November 13, 1883, at 11 o'clock A. M., at the residence of Baron von Heddersdorf, to arrange an affair pending between his Excellency Count Albrecht von Ise-neck and his Highness Prince Ulrich von Engernheim-Kypstein.

"Count von Iseneck feels his honor wounded by certain actions of Prince von Engernheim, as referred to in public court.

"Since an honorable adjustment could not be effected in a peaceful way, nothing was left for it but to have recourse to arms. After the failure of an attempt at reconciliation, the undersigned have come to a mutual understanding, and in obedience to the wishes of their principals arranged the terms of combat thus :

"The duel is to take place on November 14th, at a quarter past seven in the morning, on the grounds of the Britzow estate, at Charlottenburg.

"They are to fight with pistols, with a firm stand and free shot, at a distance of fifteen paces, and the exchange of three balls.

"There exist no other terms of agreement whatever.

<p>"For the Count von Iseneck,</p>	<p>BARON VON HEDDERSDORF, <i>Minister Plenipotentiary of the Confederate League.</i> COUNT LEBRECHT VON BOOST, <i>Lieutenant-Colonel.</i></p>
<p>"For the Prince von Engernheim,</p>	<p>COUNT PRACKS, <i>Ambassador.</i> VON BERWITZ, <i>Councilor of Legation.</i></p>

"BERLIN, November 13, 1883, 12 o'clock M."

Count Pracks folded up the paper.

"Gentlemen !" now said Baron von Heddersdorf, with solemn earnestness ; "you have heard the conditions determined upon. Do you agree to them ? Do you promise faithfully to abide by them ?"

Albrecht and Ulrich nodded their heads in assent.

"I shall only give the word 'fire !' Then turn around and cock your pistols. You can then shoot when you will. You are not bound to any particular time."

Count Boost led Count Iseneck up to the station assigned him by lot, while Berwitz did the same service for the prince. Their pistols were handed to them. The two antagonists were placed back to back.

All four seconds ranged themselves in a line parallel to the direction of the firing. Next to Ulrich stood Count Boost, by his side Count Pracks ; then followed Baron Heddersdorf and Berwitz, who consequently stood next to Count Iseneck.

The two surgeons had stepped behind the seconds.

One moment of portentous silence.

"Fire!" commanded Baron von Heddersdorf, with firm voice.

The two turned and cocked their pistols.

The triggers clicked simultaneously.

The antagonists faced each other in solemn repose.

Count Iseneck slowly lifted his pistol. Ulrich followed the movement with a similar one. It was horribly still. The seconds stood there in stony tranquillity.

This lasted for a few seconds. Then there was a sharp report, and from beneath the lowered cock of Iseneck's pistol emerged a tiny cloud of smoke. The count lowered his pistol.

Ulrich, however, anticipated him, his armed hand falling down. He had backed a little. Now he tottered and suddenly fell backward on the damp ground. His pistol had escaped his grasp.

It was the work of an instant.

Shocked, the two surgeons sprang forward, tore open his coat and waistcoat, ripped up the shirt, and discovered a red spot on the left side.

From the wound trickled slowly the tell-tale crimson blood, only a few drops, like red tears, that wept departing life. They trickled quietly over that broad, white chest. Lohausen put his ear to his breast, the junior surgeon felt the pulse.

They mournfully exchanged a look, and understood each other.

Lohausen passed his finger before the pupil of the still open eye. Not another quiver. It was all over. Life had fled. The ball had penetrated to the middle of the left chamber of the heart. The death had been instantaneous. Ulrich's face showed nothing of pain. It had a calm, peacefully smiling expression.

With distorted countenances, Pracks and Berwitz stood before Ulrich and the two surgeons kneeling beside him, hardly capable of thought, much less speech. They shrank from putting the question, which they had already answered for themselves with horror.

Finally Pracks plucked up courage.

"Dead?"

Lohausen silently nodded assent.

"And no hope?"

The surgeon slowly shook his head.

With bared head the ambassador stepped up to Count von Iseneck, who, in blank rigidity, with averted face, stood there motion-

less by Boost and Heddersdorf. All the blood had left his face. In his doubled-up right hand he still clutched the shaft of that deadly weapon. He was dreadfully shocked.

When he looked at the ambassador he let the pistol fall to the ground and bared his gray head. Heddersdorf, too, had taken off his hat, and Boost, too, carried his hand to his cap in salutation.

"The ball has pierced through the heart and caused instantaneous death."

With frightful immobility Count Iseneck received the awful announcement, but his face became ashen in hue, and his lips assumed a bluish tint.

With dignity he bowed his head and with dignity he raised it again.

Count Pracks bowed, the others thanked him, and he went back to the surgeons—to the corpse of the beautiful, noble prince, so lately full of youthful promise.

Heddersdorf and Boost took the count by the arm. He leaned upon them heavily, and unresistingly allowed himself to be led away. They dragged him a roundabout way to his carriage, in order that he might not have to pass by the other party. They helped him into the vehicle. He suffered all this to be done with him. He leaned back against the carriage cushion and covered his eyes with his hand. Boost and Heddersdorf sat opposite to him. Not a word was spoken. The carriage drove back to Berlin.

Berwitz, meanwhile, had the other landau driven up to the scene of the disaster.

The horses got scent of the dead body, they shied and stamped, they snorted and neighed, and champed their bits. The coachman had hard work to hold them in.

Jean, who had been much devoted to his young master, shed bitter tears.

And now the men laid hold—Pracks, Berwitz, the two surgeons, and Jean—and with their combined strength lifted the corpse into the carriage, which had meanwhile been opened. They brought the body into a recumbent posture. Count Pracks put his arms around poor Ulrich's shoulders, while Jean, who sat opposite, held the feet.

The landau was again closed, the curtains were drawn down, and in a walk they drove back to Berlin. A melancholy ride, lasting an hour and a half.

Berwitz and the surgeons went on foot as far as Charlottenburg. There they found a carriage, and rapidly drove back to the city. They informed the hotel keeper of what had happened, and it was arranged that a bier, with experienced attendants, should be in place at the right time.

Meanwhile, in spite of a tolerably uncomfortable night, and of a raw, dark, and chilly morning, Alix and Prince Engelbert arrived in Berlin about half-past eight, in the brightest of spirits.

Alix was delighted with the idea of surprising her husband, when in all probability she would find him still sound asleep, for Ulrich usually was a late sleeper. She was therefore much astonished, and not exactly pleased, when she learned from the *portier* that the prince was already abroad, having gone out to ride at an early hour, attended by Jean. The sport which she had been anticipating with such pleasure was all spoiled now. When she learned, upon further questioning, that a gentleman had come for the prince in a carriage she was at first much vexed.

"That stupid hunting!" pouted she to her father. "We had better have telegraphed to him that I was coming, when, surely, he would not have gone hunting to-day."

She repaired to her room and made her toilet. Alix, alas! had no reason to hurry, and allowed herself plenty of time.

The prince had already been standing some time, in faultless morning attire, at the bay window in Ulrich's room, where he wanted to breakfast with his daughter. In an absent-minded way he was looking out upon the dull, wet street.

Before the hotel door stood two men—workmen, as it seemed. There could not be any hurry about their work, however, inasmuch as they stood idly upon the pavement, talking and gazing.

Presently a landau appeared, moving very slowly. It came from the Linden into Wilhelmstrasse, and stopped in front of the hotel. The carriage-door was opened. Jean jumped out. He spoke to the two people who had been standing there. They brought forward a litter. One climbed into the carriage. Now Count Pracks got out.

A passer-by remained standing. Soon several others joined him. Now a body was lifted out of the carriage. One saw only the feet as far up as the knees.

Prince Engelbert held to the window-sill with both hands.

"For God's sake!" cried he.

He wanted to turn away, and yet some force held him to the window. He must see that most incredible, most heart-rending spectacle.

They had laid the body on the bier and covered it with a cloth ; and now they bore it up-stairs.

The curious people who had collected were dispersed by a policeman.

Beside himself, the prince rushed into the chamber of his daughter, who had on only a loose white gown, over which flowed her loosened tresses.

"What is the matter with you?" asked Alix, when she saw her father stand before her thus, pale, trembling, and utterly discomposed.

Outside there was the sound of heavy, irregular steps. Voices, too, were heard.

"A misfortune. Summon up your resolution, my poor child!"

Alix sprang to her feet. With one bound she darted to the door of the parlor and threw it open.

The door opening upon the hall had also been opened meanwhile, and they were dragging in a heavy burden. The bearers puffed and blew, perspiration standing thickly upon their foreheads.

Alix had paused upon the threshold as if petrified. She leaned against the door-post, opened her mouth, and stared at the men and at that which they were dragging, and now set carefully down upon the carpet. There, too, was Count Pracks, and yet he did not bow! He said something to the men, and they went away. Only Jean stood by that which the men had borne in.

She saw all as if in a dream. She felt a hand; she thrust it violently from her. She did not know that it was her father, who wanted to support her.

That touch had aroused her from her stupor.

With tottering step she advanced to the bier. She threw back the cloth.

A piercing, hollow, terrific shriek resounded, and Alix fell down in a swoon.

They busied themselves about the poor, grief-stricken wife—the prince, Pracks, Jean. She opened her eyes, and looked around in bewilderment. She felt herself. She could not believe in her own identity. Yes, she was living!

And he?

Ulrich was dead.

She straightened herself up. She gazed upon her beloved, who was never more to open those dear eyes which friends had closed for him.

Sobbing, she threw herself upon the corpse and kissed the already pale lips and the cold—cruelly cold—brow. She wept and wept again.

Exhausted, she slid to the floor beside the bier.

Then she caught sight of the others in the room.

"Leave me alone," pleaded she, "I entreat you; I want to be alone with him. Leave me."

Every one silently left the room.

She had seized his hand that hung down limp; she had inclosed it in her own, as though to warm it. She bedewed the hand with her kisses and tears.

"What have they done to you, my poor, good Ulrich?" asked she of him, softly, while tears streamed over her cheeks and fell upon the noble, peacefully bright countenance of the dead—him whom she had loved so devotedly. She groaned and sobbed. "Answer me—only once more!"

Ulrich remained still.

"They have murdered you—you, the dearest, best being in this world—murdered!" she shrieked, half maddened by pain. "Cursed be the wretch who has done this!"

And, again lamenting, she threw herself upon the body and sobbed like a helpless child.

Gradually these heart-rending tones of lament ceased, and slowly Alix raised her head. She drew herself up. Her tears were stanchèd; but there was a quivering of the muscles around the mouth.

She stood before him, and now, for the first time, examined him attentively. She summoned up all her strength in order to remain steadfast.

She bolted the doors. She unbuttoned his coat and turned it back. She unfastened his waistcoat and laid bare the breast.

There was that frightful wound—a small, inconsiderable wound. And this dumb mouth said to the despairing young wife that the cruelest of deeds was accomplished.

And as Alix thus tremblingly gazed upon it, from this dreadful

opening made by the ball on its way to the sources of life flowed one more bright, reddish drop—the last bloody tear.

Then Alix sank upon her knees, weeping and praying fervently. She stood up. From the breast-pocket of his coat something white peeped out. A letter. The ball had pierced it through and through, cutting a sharply defined round hole in it.

“For Alix” was on the envelope.

With uneven steps she dragged herself to a seat, and read :

“MY DEARLY LOVED ALIX: If I can tell you so no more, I will write it to you—I have never loved anybody but you. My heart belonged to you from the first moment, and my last thought, the last throb of my heart belongs to you alone.

“I have to obey the code of honor, and honor cares not for our love. It is unquestionably cruel that the guiltless survivors should be the ones most severely punished; but there is no help for it. You are the daughter and the wife of a nobleman. Be brave, my poor child, be resolute! Do not be overpowered by your grief; give the rest an example by your greatness of soul. You owe it to our child to bring him up in love for his father and in the feelings of a gentleman.

“The one to whom I did a wrong in the years of my youthful levity has forgiven me. Read the accompanying paper written by yourself.

“And you, too, will forgive me if I prepare you the deepest grief through my death. For I have only loved you, Alix. I do love only you; you love me, and love pardons everything.

“Be brave!

“I kiss you and our son from a full heart, and am faithful unto death.

Yours,

ULRICH.”

A few words of the letter had been shot through by the ball. The inclosed page contained those words, which, a long, long time ago the fever-sick Juliane had dictated for Alix to write; but they, too, had been riddled by the ball: “Our . . . is canceled,”

The syllable which had signified “guilt” that deadly ball had taken with it in its destructive flight, and driven it into the heart of the deceased.

On the following day the sun shone gloriously. It was an unusually warm, fine day for that season of the year.

At noon, an exceedingly long funeral procession moved from the Hotel Royal, through the Brandenburger Thor and Königgrätzerstrasse to the Potsdam Railway station, whence the corpse of Prince Ulrich was to be taken by an extra train to Kypstein.

In front of the funeral car whereon stood the coffin, fairly hidden from sight by the profusion of floral offerings, Count Boost's regimental band performed that glorious choral, instinct with comfort and promise, "Jesus, my trust."

In the first carriage sat Alix and her father. She was unnaturally pale, and motionless as a statue hewed out of marble. She held herself erect. She was so brave—just as he would have her.

Juliane, who was almost entirely deadened to impressions from the outside world, and whose spirit dragged heavily along in deep darkness, had to-day caused the doors and windows of her park chamber to be opened wide. She wanted sunshine. She had thrown a shawl across her knee, and was making lace as nimbly and dexterously as the little fingers of hers could be made to move.

Suddenly she stopped to listen.

Music!

It had been long since she had heard any music. She called "Ida!"

"Find out," said she, indistinctly, and with a faltering tongue, "what that music is for."

"A funeral, your ladyship."

"Who are they burying?"

"I'll find out directly, my lady, and bring you word."

"Quick! quick! quick!"

Nervously she worked away.

In a few minutes Ida came back with the announcement:

"Prince Ulrich von Engernheim."

Juliane lifted her dull eyes to her, without taking in her meaning, and slowly let her bobbin fall.

"Prince Ulrich?" repeated she.

She bethought herself. She smiled in a strange way. Ida softly withdrew.

Juliane again took up her bobbin, and again began to work away and sing:

"Dishonored does the husband feel,
Then cold and keen his vengeful steel."

She had selected a lively tune to go to this. And she sang on without looking up from her lace-pillow.

Nero, in his corner, slowly got up, stretched himself, and looked around in bewilderment. Slowly he approached his mistress. Song was for him an unfamiliar and disagreeable noise. He raised his head, opened his great mouth, and howled piteously.

"Hush, Nero! Be still!" exclaimed Juliane, and the tone in which she called to the dog reminded her of a certain something that had happened once. She thought, and thought, but in vain.

In the distance the choral was dying away amid the noises of the great city.

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